Transcending Boundaries: Modern Poetic Responses to the City

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Abstract

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This thesis examines poetic representations of the city in the works of T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Roy Fisher, Iain Sinclair, and Aidan Andrew Dun. Chapter One discusses Eliot's vision of the city, arguing that Eliot was always seeking new ways for forming urban imagery. Concentrating on the relation between poetic form and urban images, I look at Eliot's poetry including his unpublished poems to highlight how modernism, form, and the city inform one another.

Chapter Two examines briefly Williams’s response to Eliot’s vision of London in *The Waste Land*, highlighting the contrast between Eliot’s cosmopolitanism and Williams’s localism/ provincialism. Exploring the relation between Williams’s representation of Paterson in *Paterson* and Roy Fisher’s poetic representation of Birmingham in *City* and *A Furnace*, I reveal that Fisher adopts Williams’s approach to the city but subsequently diverges from it thus creating a new urban poetics.

Chapter Three investigates Iain Sinclair’s visionary representation of London in *Lud Heat* in conjunction with *Lights Out for the Territory*, and I examine Sinclair’s notion of the city as a text. I argue that Sinclair’s textual representation of London gives a new meaning to the relation between poetry and the city. I also look at Sinclair’s rewriting of the *flâneur* as a strategy to elide the boundaries between real and imagined spaces.

Chapter Four concentrates on Aidan Andrew Dun’s representation of London in his long poem *Vale Royal*, and I look at Dun’s use of the two romantic poets (William Blake and Thomas Chatterton) as a strategy to revive the city’s metropolitan history. I compare Dun’s vision of London with that of Sinclair and Eliot, stressing how Dun engages in rewriting modernism’s definitive view of the city.
To my wife Najwa, and our children
Muhammad and Tala
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Abbreviations

FE

VR

UPUC

WLFT

SP

TCTC

SE

CPP

F

ITTSP

LS

IMH

LOT

LHSB

SM
Introduction

This thesis explores literary representations of the city in the work of T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Roy Fisher, Iain Sinclair, and Aidan Andrew Dun. It focuses on how the city evokes in the mind of the poet various images and how these images interact with the actual city. Each chapter in this thesis emphasises one poetic aspect of the relation between real and imagined spaces. My intention in this thesis is not to provide an inclusive survey of poetry of the city in the twentieth century, but to discuss and analyse a specific set of the poetic responses to the modern city. My discussion of the city in the work of the poets in question serves to reflect on the development of twentieth-century poetry of the city and how these poets understood and responded to Eliot's high modernism.

In twentieth-century poetry, the city is an important and complex theme because in writing about cities poets redefine their relation to literary and cultural tradition. The city is a complex theme because it elicits in the poet contradictory feelings. Broadly speaking, the city for the poet is a source of inspiration. What inspires the poet is not merely its buildings, streets, and people but also its impact on the human self, psyche, and imagination. Through imaginative accounts of the city we witness how modern poetry interacts with history, culture, and society. The city poses a challenge for the modern poet who feels that – due to his commitment to the social and cultural tradition – his role is to respond to the social, moral, cultural, and psychological tensions which the city epitomises.

In this thesis I seek to present a close reading of the poetic conceptions of cities which have not been given their due critical attention. How has the modern city given rise to new poetic
images and experiences? What is the impact of the city on poetic form? How do modern poets use the city as a technical, literary device in order to respond to the problems posed by the city? These are some of the questions which this thesis will attempt to answer. In dealing with poetry of the city, I have established a contextual frame of reference within which the work of Eliot, Williams, Fisher, Sinclair, and Dun can be analysed. Within the English literary tradition, there are many references to the city, but the city in modern British poetry has not been given sufficient critical consideration.

Throughout this thesis, I use the term ‘city poetry’ in a way similar to that of John Johnston where poetry of the city does not only describe the physical real city but also reflects on the nature of living within cities.¹ I will discuss how the concept of the modern city is central to T.S. Eliot’s development as a poet. Eliot’s poetic conceptions and his distinctive urban experience can be linked with the work of other modern poets, such as Sinclair and Dun, who also write about modern London. Fisher, Sinclair, and Dun are associated with the ‘British Revival Poetry’ of the 1970s. They responded to the poetic practice of the Movement (such as Donald Davie, Philip Larkin, and Thom Gunn) and sought models like Eliot, Pound and Williams. Poets of the ‘British Poetry Revival’ sought to rethink modernism and revive the city as a cultural concept. Some of these poets developed an interest in London as a social, cultural, and historical space, and this tendency contributed to the rise of ‘literary London’ as a distinct academic field.²

In each chapter of this thesis we find that modern poetry gives an imaginative reality to the city and the city in turn challenges the poet to find new modes of artistic expression adequate to its protean nature. This reciprocity between the poet and the city is a defining characteristic of modern poetry of the city. Modern poetry responds to the fragmentary, transient experience of the modern city through devising new poetic structures and techniques. The poignant reality of the city is vividly seen through the nature of poetic imagery. In the work of the modern poets discussed in this thesis, the city is not a passive setting but an active agent. Each chapter of this study discusses and analyses the inseparable relation between the city and the poetic text.

Critical surveys of literature and the city have been concerned with finding ways to describe how the city and the literary text interact. John H. Johnston’s book *The Poet and the City: A Study in Urban Perspectives* (1984) focuses on how poetry depicts the city proceeding from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. This survey attempts to come to a better understanding of the historical development of city poetry by analysing what Johnston termed ‘loco-descriptive poetry’. As Johnston states in the introduction, his study concerns the way poetry engages with the ‘topographical tradition’ in which the city is described as a physical, material space and an ‘experiential entity’. This approach underlies his analysis of T.S. Eliot’s poetry in a chapter entitled ‘The Soul of the City and T.S. Eliot’. In it Johnston argues that *The Waste Land* is ‘a poem of place’, and discusses how London in the poem is described with ‘a surprising degree of particularity’ (Johnston, 170). My chapter on Eliot develops this argument, contrasting the specificity of the city in *The Waste Land* with the generality of the city in Eliot’s early published and unpublished poems and how this contrast serves to highlight Eliot’s ways of describing urban content.
In Edward Timms and David Kelley's *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art* (1985), we see a different approach to the city in literature. Relating modernism to the city, art, and cinema, the editors argue that avant-garde writers of Europe saw the modern city as unreal, unstable, and insecure. This response is rooted in urbanization, the city's growth, and the social, cultural, and historical changes that occurred within the city. Placing Eliot's image of the 'unreal city' in a European context, the book records how writers from Europe have formulated antagonistic responses to the city and developed new ways for conveying the challenges of urban and cultural life. This approach contrasts with Johnston’s 'loco-descriptive' because it moves away from ways that poetry uses to describe and specify the city towards ways in which literature and art respond to the paradoxes of metropolitan cultural life. Michael Long argues in his chapter 'Eliot, Pound, Joyce: Unreal City?' that Eliot's image of the 'unreal city' applies to Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and that it is a central image in the discussion of modernism's general account of the city: 'Already a great poetic image it also became a received idea, adopted as English Modernism's definitive report on the city.' Long goes on to argue, however, that Eliot's and Pound's recoil from the city is challenged by Joyce's representation of Dublin in *Ulysses* as a lively and energetic city. One limitation to this study is that it focuses only on European writers who belong to the modernist canon. In my discussion of Williams and Fisher, I look at how modernism overlooked localism/provincialism, arguing that Williams's and Fisher's critical perspectives, from which the modern city can be imagined, offer another form of modernism. Williams's *Paterson* and Fisher's *City* and *A Furnace* exemplify a non-metropolitan poetry that is significant in our overall comprehension of the ways the city has been conceptualized in modernism.

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The image of the 'unreal city' underlies William Chapman Sharpe's *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams* (1990). Sharpe approaches poetry of the city from the perspective of gender, arguing that urban poetry engages with the meeting of an unexpected stranger in the crowd, identified by Walter Benjamin in his reading of Baudelaire's urban vision. This meeting, Sharpe observes, is symbolic and engenders an urban text which underpins 'the interplay between the sexual nature of urban experience and the textuality of the city.'\(^4\) In his reading of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, for instance, Sharpe observes that Eliot makes the unreal city real once again through the meeting with Tiresias who symbolizes the city's sexual barrenness. My chapter on Eliot discusses and analyses the question of the unreality of the city. Considering *The Waste Land*'s manuscripts, I link the 'unreal city' image with Eliot's vision of the city outside time and show how this association adds to our understanding of Eliot's techniques of creating urban imagery.

In Richard Lehan's *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (1998), we find yet another different approach to the city in literature. Lehan emphasises the relation between the city in literature and urban history in his discussion of 'the ways the city has been conceptualized from its origins to the present time'.\(^5\) His main approach is to ground the urban text in 'a theory of place', as he states in the introduction, and to discuss the ways in which the literary text can be anchored in literary and cultural history. Examining the work of French, English, and American writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lehan revives our interest in the city through discussing how the intellectual and cultural history of the city informs the literary text. He uses the work of urban sociologists such as Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and


Robert E. Park in order to shed light on the relation between the materiality of the city and its literary representations.

Peter Barry’s book *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (2000) is an interesting critical survey of contemporary poetry of the city. The book argues that ‘poetry is in trouble’ because it is still concerned with rural life and nature and hardly speaks of the urban. Barry seeks to re-establish the link between poetry and the urban through his discussion of a wide range of contemporary poets. The book approaches poetry of the city by revealing the tension between the rural and the urban and how contemporary poets engage with the urban ‘remaining relatively untempted’ by the countryside. In my discussion of Williams and Fisher, who differ in their approaches to the city, I argue that while Williams’s *Paterson* celebrates the peripheral city, Fisher’s poetry elides the boundaries between metropolitan and provincial spaces. I relate this approach to my argument about the city and poetic form and the ways these poets differ in their description of specific and general locales.

Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: Materiality, Memory, Spectrality* (2004) examines the reciprocal relation between the experience of the city and the nature of the urban text. Wolfreys argues that conceptions of London during the fin de siècle period have created a new urban sensibility in the post-war urban imagination, and that there is a crisis of representation that emerges from this new sensibility. Wolfreys observes that the problem of representing London is that it is haunted and that this ‘hauntology’ disturbs the individual’s conception of the real city. Applying Jacques Derrida’s neologism ‘hauntology’, Wolfreys stresses its pun in French which is ‘ontology’ and suggests that the two terms underlie descriptions of London which often shift between existence and non-existence. In discussing the work of Elizabeth Bowen, Maureen Duffy, Peter Ackroyd, and Iain Sinclair, Wolfreys maintains that there is an inescapable

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discordance between London as a material space and the ways in which it is described and imagined. In my discussion of Sinclair’s and Aidan Dun’s representations of London, I develop the argument of hauntology/ontology in relation to Sinclair’s image of the city as a text in *Lud Heat* and *Lights Out for the Territory* and his constant shifting of the boundaries between real and imagined spaces.

The first chapter of the thesis engages with Eliot’s literary response to the city. Eliot modernised poetry by confronting the problems which the modern city generated. Throughout his poetic *oeuvre*, Eliot has always been a poet of the city. His interest in finding new ways for expressing the nature of urban experience is manifest in his unpublished poems. Examining some of these poems allows us to discover a close relation between Eliot’s revival of the city as a subject matter and the new poetic forms which, arguably, the city calls forth. Moving on to Eliot’s early published poems, I will contend that Eliot’s view of the city is inseparable from his conception of inner psychic states. This is significant because we see the modern city and its impact through Eliot’s depiction of the psychological tensions in modern consciousness. Examining the manuscripts of *The Waste Land*, I will analyse Eliot’s portrayal of London and reveal that this portrayal is inseparable from Eliot’s vision of the decline of Western civilisation. London in *The Waste Land* is not merely a geographical setting but a medium through which Eliot uncovers the social and cultural life of the British metropolis. Assessing Eliot’s early poems in conjunction with *The Waste Land*, I will examine how the city in *The Waste Land* acquires wider connotations where the realistic, physical city is transformed into a symbolic, metaphorical space. I will argue that ways of reading *The Waste Land* inform Eliot’s conception of the poem as a city poem. This is achieved through *The Waste Land’s* spatial form. Eliot’s technique of juxtaposing images of the city amounts to a spatial form that causes the poem to
diverge from habitual modes of reading and comprehension. My examining of Eliot’s conception of the city brings me then to comment on the perception of London as an ‘unreal city’ and how this vision did not preclude Eliot from aspiring towards the city outside time.

The second chapter discusses two important modern poets. The first section of the chapter looks briefly at William Carlos Williams’s response to Eliot’s conception of the city. In discussing Williams’s *Paterson*, I do not intend to reveal an American conception of the city but rather to present how the modern city is represented from a different perspective. Williams’s approach to Paterson as a non-metropolitan space suggests another form of modernism by providing another way of conceiving the modern city. This approach enhances our reading of Eliot’s urban vision. Williams’s emphasis on local culture as a defining feature of the modern city suggests a literary perspective that has often been overlooked due to the centrality of the metropolis in modernism. In *Paterson*, Williams tends to make the city poetic through his power, inviting us to see Paterson as a city that stands behind poetic inventiveness: ‘it calls for a poetry that I did not know’. *Paterson* is particularly interesting because it embodies the poet’s rebirth in a local/provincial milieu.

The second section of the chapter reflects on Williams’s achievement as central to modern British poetry. Examining the poetry of Roy Fisher, I argue that Williams’s poetics has paved the path for post-war British poetry of the city. Applying the lessons of Williams, Fisher approaches Birmingham from a similar perspective. But Fisher subsequently diverges from Williams’s way of representing the city, thus creating a new poetics of the city. Fisher’s return to early modernist techniques such as defamiliarization and his conception of the changing nature of the modern city are factors that contributed to creating a new poetic voice. Revealing the

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problems of re-imagining Birmingham, Fisher's *City* and *A Furnace* exhibit a tension between regionalism and metropolitanism. I will argue that Fisher’s poetry underlines the tension between the urbanised post-war city of the present and the industrial city of past which continually reasserts itself through poetic images. Fisher invites us to rethink the problematic relation between the physical, real city of time and space and the imaginative city of the mind. Through the problem of perception, Fisher underscores the significance of urban ruin and renewal and the effects of war and industrialisation. Envisioning the city as a palimpsest, as a multi-layered historical phenomenon where the ghosts of the past repeatedly haunt the present, Fisher uncovers how the city has become central in the post-war urban imagination. Fisher’s urban poetry contests the conception that the modern world has completely freed itself from the tyranny of the past. This interaction between the present and the past brings us back to Eliot’s conception of the relation between time and space.

The third chapter concerns Iain Sinclair’s visionary representation of London in *Lud Heat*. Reading *Lud Heat* in conjunction with *Lights Out for the Territory*, I will examine Sinclair’s notion of the city as a text, arguing that *Lud Heat* has paved the way for Sinclair’s textual representation of London. Both texts will be discussed in relation to Sinclair’s response to the social, cultural, economic, and political problems which the contemporary city generates. I will highlight that Sinclair’s critique of the modern metropolis leads him to search for ‘alternative cartographies of the city’ (*LOT*, 142). Throughout his work, Sinclair suggests that we need to find new ways for mapping the city’s space. Through his psychogeographic mapping of London territories, Sinclair illuminates forgotten cultures. Underlying his psychogeographic reading of the East End churches in *Lud Heat* is an attempt to create an urban myth. I will also examine Sinclair’s new conception of the *flâneur*, a figure through which Sinclair reveals that the
boundaries between the *hard city* and the *soft city*, to use Jonathan Raban’s terms, are tenuous. The chapter will then consider how Sinclair’s literary representation of the metropolis can be read as a response to the changes precipitated by Thatcher’s political regime which contributed to creating a dystopian London. My study of Sinclair will reveal that London, in both *Lud Heat* and *Lights Out for the Territory*, is a space of continual erasures and deletions. This theme underlies his recent project *London: City of Disappearances*. Sinclair’s work is particularly interesting because it gives a new meaning to the concept of ‘urban space’ where London appears to counteract its aesthetic and cultural past.

The fourth chapter examines Aidan Andrew Dun’s vision of London in *Vale Royal*, a long poem of two cycles in which the literary history of London is revealed through re-imagining two major romantic poets, William Blake and Thomas Chatterton. Dun’s juxtaposition of contemporary London with a glorious, mythical past presents a new vision of London. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first concerns Dun’s use of the two romantic poets as a literary device to reflect on the modern condition of the city and its social, historical, cultural, and literary problems. The second investigates the idea that Dun’s rewriting and reviving of the romantics places *Vale Royal* at the opposite extreme to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. This idea reveals Dun’s way of unwriting modernism’s negative view of the city. The third section looks at Dun’s representation of London in terms of the political forces that shape it, which is one of the central issues in post-war urban discourse. Reflecting back on Iain Sinclair’s work, I will argue that Dun shares with other London visionaries (Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, and Michael Moorcock) the desire to use London myths and legends as a means to criticise the contemporary city and its political, social, and cultural life.
CHAPTER ONE

The City and Form in
T.S. Eliot’s Poetry

i. The City in Eliot’s Unpublished Poems

How modern poetry should be written in order to reflect the new modern consciousness is a question that preoccupied most modernists. In ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ (1921), Eliot stated that modern poets must be difficult. This difficulty can be considered one of the major characteristics of modern poetry. Conceiving modern poetry as difficult underlines a break from the traditional ways of writing and composing poetry. The idea that poets must be difficult suggests that poetry must not simply be read but also re-read in order to decipher its intrinsic complexity. This gives a new role to readers and critics alike. There is then a tendency in modern poetry to undermine traditional expectations concerning coherence and unity in the text and to create a new poetic form through which poets may revolutionise poetic language. One aspect of Eliot’s difficulty relates to the density of his literary allusions which places heavy demands on the reader. I. A. Richards describes Eliot’s allusions as ‘ambiguous’ arguing, ‘the truth is that very much of the best poetry is necessarily ambiguous in its immediate effect.’ Another aspect of the difficulty of modern poetry can be related, in Eliot’s case, to the attempt to create a spatial form that breaks from the traditional ways of constructing literary texts. Eliot’s poetry departs from a sequential narrative structure, which characterises much of the poetry of the nineteenth

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century, in favour of establishing a spatial juxtaposition of poetic elements. In this chapter I will develop Joseph Frank's concept of 'spatial form' and examine how it provides a reasonable perspective from which we can examine Eliot's urban poetry. In order to gain a better understanding of Eliot's urban poetic form, I will look at how Eliot's unpublished poems, collected by Christopher Ricks in *Inventions of the March Hare* (1996), have paved the way towards other urban forms in Eliot's early published poems such as 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Preludes', and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', all published in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917). These poems exhibit different ways of dealing with the city and its imagery. I will examine how Eliot's urban images in the early published poems contrast with the spatial form of *The Waste Land* (1922). I will then look at Eliot's way of sequencing urban imagery and the relation between the city and poetic form in *Four Quartets*.

The subject of the city is not new in modern literature. The city has always been a subject matter from the classical writings of Plato to the present. Modern poetry looks at this subject matter from a new perspective, and this is related to the way the city is used in light of modernism's preoccupations with form. Edward Timms notes that modernist responses to the city have antecedents in the work of nineteenth-century writers like Wordsworth, Dickens, James Thomson and Friedrich Engels. Timms goes on to assert that 'the transformation which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century was a matter not so much of thematic innovation as of new modes of artistic expression.' This statement suggests that modernism not only re-introduced the city but was also concerned with finding new ways for articulating urban content. Eliot's image of London in *The Waste Land* as a crowded city of hell, for example, was articulated by P.B. Shelley:

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Hell is a city much like London—
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shewn, and still less pity.11

The resemblance between Shelley's stanza and Eliot's lines in 'The Burial of the Dead' is striking, particularly in the word 'undone'. Shelley provides us with an image of the crowded hell-like London where people are lost and without hope. Eliot reimagines London as hell, while Shelley reverses the image (likening hell to London) and this is a significant spatial shift. It is true that Eliot identified the source of his lines in *The Waste Land* as coming from Dante's *Inferno*, but Shelley's lines could also be one of the implied or 'unstated' literary allusions of Eliot's poem.12 Shelley's romanticism is manifest in his choice of expressions that reveal poetic sentiments as suggested by 'pity' and 'justice', for instance. Shelley simply sees the city as 'populous', while the heavily populated city in Eliot's poem reminds the speaker that death did not spare the lives of people but, on the contrary, it reminds him of its brutality. The speaker in Eliot's poem marvels at the thought that death 'had undone so many'. The speaker avoids expressing his emotion by joining the reality of the city's crowdedness with the reality of death. Eliot, moreover, differs from Shelley by presenting a new way for articulating the theme of the modern city as a hell-like place through blending Baudelaire's and Dante's images.

Eliot's juxtaposition of Baudelaire's and Dante's images suggests the poem's spatial form. Arguably, one of the 'new modes of artistic expression' can be seen in the question of


12 Eliot acknowledged his distaste for Shelley's poetry but he also admitted that he 'was intoxicated by Shelley's poetry at the age of fifteen'. See Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1964), p. 96.
spatial form. The idea of spatial form as a defining characteristic of modern poetry stems from Eliot’s interest in the city as a subject matter for poetry. Eliot not only re-introduced the city to modern English poetry but also thought of expressing it in a new form. In modernism, the city acquires a new meaning because it is looked at from a different viewpoint. In the nineteenth century, the city was viewed from a rural perspective, from a position outside the city itself due to the existence of rural and urban communities. In modernism, however, due to the dynamic acceleration of urban life and the movement of people from rural areas (countryside) to urban areas (towns and cities), ‘there is no longer any position outside the city from which it can be viewed as a coherent whole’ (Timms, 3). This statement forms the basis of Eliot’s urban experience of London in The Waste Land in which London appears as a stifling, alienated place from which the inhabitant finds no escape. This conception suggests that the city in modernism has changed and so have its representations and ways of imagining urban space.

As a result of this change, there arises a new psychological state which the twentieth-century metropolis has created. In ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (1903), Georg Simmel studied the influence of the metropolis on man’s inner psychic states and thinking. Simmel contrasts rural with urban life, suggesting that living in cities makes people more prone to accepting social, cultural, and economic changes which lead to the development of what he calls the ‘blasé attitude’. This attitude indicates that the inhabitants of the city become nonchalant and indifferent to what happens around them in order to protect themselves.13 So the inhabitants are aware of the various forces which the metropolis generates. To reveal this new awareness, modern poets use the city in order to re-define this new urban experience which took shape in and by the city. Eliot’s response to the city is marked by an attempt to re-define what constitutes

the modern urban experience, to re-define the urban environment that gives rise to poetic personality – the poet begins to occupy a textual presence within the city. This effort is clear in his early poems: ‘Preludes’, ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, and ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’, to mention but a few. There is enough evidence that Eliot, throughout his poetic career, was concerned with articulating a new poetic form. This concern stems from his view that poetry was undergoing a process of erosion, a process that rendered it spiritually valueless. The continual effort to revive the poetic shape of his poetry and to renew its ways of expression is reflected in the awareness that modern urban life has become complex and intricate and that modern poetry should reflect this new mental condition. The urban forms of the unpublished poems are worth examining because they throw light on how Eliot developed and modernised these forms. The connotation and significance of the urban forms will be measured against other ways of sequencing urban imagery in the attempt to come to a better understanding of the development of Eliot’s urban poetry.

Throughout his poetic career, Eliot was always preoccupied with poetic form. Eliot wrote in quatrains while he was in Paris (1910-1911), possibly under the influence of Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs du Mal which first appeared in 1845. Though written in a conservative poetic form (quatrains), Les Fleurs du Mal can be seen as a major text that presents the ugly reality of the city and this is probably what attracted Eliot. In Little Gidding, Eliot imitated and modified Dante’s terza rima, a verse form consisting of unrhymed tercets (three lines) in iambic pentameter. In ‘Prufrock’, Eliot used the form of the ‘interior monologue’. The manuscripts of The Waste Land reveal Eliot’s use of heroic couplets. It is noticeable that his early urban poetry differs in its poetic form or shape from The Waste Land. The shift from the quatrain form of the unpublished poems to the ‘open’ form of The Waste Land strongly confirms Eliot’s concern to
revive poetic form in modern poetry. The poem has an ‘open’ form – despite the fact that it begins with the idea that man knows only ‘a heap of broken images’ and concludes with the fragments and images that are shored against the speaker’s ruins – in the sense that the reader participates in the construction of meaning and interpretation.¹⁴

The development of poetic form in Eliot’s poetry suggests Eliot’s concern to find other ways of describing poetic content. The shift from the form of the unpublished poems to the form of the early published poems occurs possibly because Eliot felt that city poetry needs a freer form of expression and that quatrains, as a traditional form, may hinder the flow of urban imagery or restrict content. The unpublished poems, it is important to note, do not differ in terms of themes from Eliot’s early published poems, but they clearly unveil a poetic form that Eliot abandons later when he started publishing his work. The urban themes of the unpublished poems (desolateness, sterile sexual relationships, and moral degradation) echo throughout Eliot’s oeuvre.

We can speculate on why Eliot did not publish these poems. The problem with the unpublished poems is not their urban content or themes but their incomplete and imperfect form. They serve as preliminary sketches which he intended to work at later, probably by emphasising the concept of impersonality or by unifying simple images to create one complex image. A good illustration of this point is ‘Suppressed Complex’ (1914?), a poem of two stanzas, the second of which seems to be another version of the first. The two stanzas deal with the same image. This is a fine example of Eliot’s preoccupation with forms of expression. The form of this poem is incomplete because it neither intensifies the image nor develops it. Eliot wrote to Pound on 2 February, 1915: ‘I enclose one small verse. I know it is not good, but everything else I have done is

worse.' The poem is not good possibly because of the quatrain form or because the form is at odds with the content. Though quatrains are the most common of all English stanzaic forms, they restrict content, the poetic image, and meaning.

Possibly Eliot was not interested in the quatrain form itself but in its power to create a new feeling:

I can recall clearly enough the moment when, at the age of fourteen or so, I happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's *Omar* which was lying about, and the almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling which this poem was the occasion of giving me. It was like a sudden conversion; the world appeared anew, painted with bright, delicious and painful colours. (*UPUC*, 33)

Eliot appears to be questioning the relation between form and content here. Arguably, Eliot later uses the quatrain form as a model to express his modern experience and to introduce a new feeling which the content of poetry imposes. In 'Silence' (1910), Eliot uses couplets:

```
Along the city streets
It is still high tide,
Yet the garrulous waves of life
Shrink and divide
With a thousand incidents
Vexed and debated: –
This is the hour for which we waited –

This is the ultimate hour
When life is justified.
The seas of experience
That were so broad and deep,
So immediate and steep,
Are suddenly still.
At such peace I am terrified.
There is nothing else beside. (*IMH*, 18)
```
This is a good example of a poem in its preliminary stages of composition. Eliot offers us a
vision of the crowd in the streets during the rush hour, probably when city clerks are commuting
home. And this description inspires the observer to recoil to an internal personal experience
which he finds both deadening and inexplicable. While the first stanza suggests an image of the
anonymous faceless crowd moving and murmuring, the second presents the speaker imagining
life becoming still. As a result, the speaker experiences a feeling of insecurity. The poem
presents an image that reminds us of Prufrock’s problem. But it can also be compared with the
image of the crowd flowing over London Bridge in *The Waste Land*. The image in this poem is
incomplete and unclear and lacks the insight presented by the image of the crowd in *The Waste
Land*. The sullen repeated rhymes do not capture the intense unknowable complexity of a city
that remains abstract. Eliot relies upon the tired trope of an undulating sea to reflect the urban
experience of existential psycho-rhythms, hinting at a nineteenth-century perspective by using a
visual image (the sea) that is alien to its modern physical landscape. Whilst there are continuities
between the unpublished poems and Eliot’s later urban poetry in terms of urban themes, the
example above suggests some of the differences between the published and unpublished poems.
The sentiments expressed and the rhyming couplets are habitual and regular in the unpublished
poems but residual and strategic in *The Waste Land*.

In the unpublished poem ‘*Paysage Triste*’ (1914), Eliot describes a girl with red hair. The
content of this poem is reminiscent of Baudelaire’s description of a girl with russet hair in his
poem ‘*A Une Mendiante Rousse*’ (To a Red-Haired Beggar Girl) in *Tableaux Parisiens*.
However, the way Eliot expresses this subject matter is different from that of Baudelaire. Eliot in
‘Paysage Triste’ writes:

The girl who mounted in the omnibus
The rainy day, and paid a penny fair
Who answered my appreciative stare
With that averted look without surprise
Which only the experienced can wear
A girl with reddish hair and faint blue eyes

An almost denizen of Leicester Square.
We could not have had her in the box with us
She would not have known how to sit, or what to wear (IMH, 52)

In Baudelaire’s poem:

Pale girl with russet hair,
Tatters in what you wear
Show us your poverty
And your beauty

For me, poor poet, in
The frail and freckled skin
Of your young flesh
Is a sweetness.16

The two poems are similar since both reveal the flâneur’s reaction to a poor girl in a city (possibly Paris). Although the two poems are analogous in content, they differ in poetic form. Eliot reflects the flâneur’s experience in a prosaic or narrative style, unlike Baudelaire who addresses the girl directly. Eliot’s poem registers the poet’s emotional state for an urban passerby, but expresses Edwardian sentiments of class difference and social assimilation. Thus, the poem reflects, through the experience of the flâneur, a city examined in its social form. The difference between ‘Paysage Triste’, written circa 1914, and ‘Prufrock’ or ‘Rhapsody’ is that it does not reflect Eliot’s impersonal voice but rather engages with a poetic voice directly commenting on the scene. This might be one reason why Eliot felt the poem was unpublishable.

The description of the girl in Eliot’s poem is Baudelairean but the line: ‘An almost denizen of

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Leicester Square' evokes an English urban milieu. Despite the fact that Baudelaire sees the city as an ugly and unpoetic entity, Eliot is attracted to Baudelaire's poetry because he did not turn instead towards a natural environ, he poeticises the city. In Baudelaire's time, the city was traditionally looked at by many critics as inherently unpoetic – there was nothing aesthetically gratifying about the city in that era. It was looked at as a place of vice, boredom, and squalor. Eliot modernises the way the city is represented by turning it into poetry. In 'What Dante Means to Me' (1950), Eliot specified that: 'the business of the poet [is] to make poetry out of the unexplored resources of the unpoetical; that the poet, in fact, [is] committed by his profession to turn the unpoetical into poetry'. There is something fascinating in Baudelaire's poem which is that: 'The beggar girl is whimsically being treated as though she were a sixteenth-century beauty.' Eliot must have found Baudelaire's description of the girl interesting because Baudelaire's technique bridges the present with the past. Eliot did not publish the poem possibly because he could not turn what he took from Baudelaire into something better or different: 'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different' (SP, 153).

Eliot's unpublished poem 'First Caprice in North Cambridge' (1909) is essential to the understanding of poetic form in Eliot's work. This poem develops a method reminiscent of 'Preludes' in the sense that it collects fragments of images from the outside world: 'dirty windows', 'bottles and broken glass' and 'a heap of broken barrows' which are recurrent in the early poems. Its poetic method is one of collecting, rather than connecting, a heap of broken images:

A street-piano, garrulous and frail;

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18 See McGowan's notes to Baudelaire's The Flowers of Evil, p. 370.
The yellow evening flung against the panes
Of dirty windows: and the distant strains
Of Children's voices, ended in a wail. (IMH, 13)

Artefacts seem abandoned and disconnected from the wider fabric of the city, and Eliot focuses on the discordant sounds of the lower-classes, viewed as insipid chattering. These lines collocate snapshots from the outside world in a fragmented style that points to the technique of The Waste Land. The poem, moreover, uses a traditional rhyme-scheme (abba), an aspect that seems to diminish in the early published poems because of Eliot's interest in vers libre. Eliot does not consider vers libre a verse form because, as he remarked in 'Reflections on Vers Libre', it can only be defined negatively: (1) absence of pattern, (2) absence of rhyme, (3) absence of meter (SP, 32). These qualities point to the contrast between vers libre and conventional rhyme-schemes. While the former is characterised by an absence of pattern, rhyme, and meter, the latter shows a pattern according to which rhymes are arranged in a stanza or a poem. So the absence of pattern, rhyme, and meter indicates that vers libre is truly revolutionary. Though 'First Caprice in North Cambridge' can be compared with 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' in terms of cityscapes, the former is written in a form different from that of the latter. 'First Caprice' seems to limit the development of urban images into a meaningful coherent whole. The poem is a development in Eliot's attempt to mirror the textual experience of the city within the texture of the poem. But for Eliot the city is a noisy pollution intimidating his refined ears.

Similarly, the quatrains in 'Suppressed Complex' hinder the flow of city imagery. Viewed structurally, the poem consists of two quatrains that present two versions of the same image, namely a woman lying in her bed with the presence of the poet in the background, an image that recalls the third section of 'Preludes'. In 'Suppressed Complex', Eliot writes:
She lay very still in bed with stubborn eyes
Holding her breath lest she begin to think
I was a shadow upright in the corner
Dancing joyously in the firelight.

She stirred in her sleep and clutched the blanket with her fingers
She was very pale and breathed hard.
When morning shook the long nasturtium creeper in the tawny bowl
I passed joyously out through the window. (IMH, 54)

This poem shows a direct reflection on the state of the woman but the engagement between the observer and his subject is detached. The presence of the poet is ghostly whilst the gaze seems physically present. In terms of technique, the first quatrain introduces an image that is opposite to the second. The first three lines of the first quatrain present a ‘still’ image of the woman and the poet, and this image contradicts the fourth line which suggests a physical movement. In the second quatrain, the four lines suggest a movement. In these quatrains, Eliot attempts to express a poetic experience, but somehow the content of the poem does not build up because of the poem’s limited form. In this sense, the poem does not develop a clear image. The two quatrains seem to suggest the first stages of composition, namely Eliot’s technique of writing first in a sequential narrative style and then, at a later stage, turning it into a well-structured poetic image. This narrative style is replaced by the technique of ellipsis and juxtaposition which dominates Eliot’s early poems. In the third section of ‘Preludes’, Eliot presents a similar image but this time he modifies the use of quatrains by delaying rhymes:

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.19

The image in this passage is improved mainly because it is not structurally confined by quatrains. The delayed rhyme and use of anaphora helps to free up the relation between the image and expression. The use of semi-colons at the end of the second and fifth lines indicates a break from the quatrain form. This moves towards the verse libre of *The Waste Land* suggesting an existential correlation between the private consciousness and the isolated space. In *The Waste Land*, the ‘thousand sordid images’ inform the whole poetic method and are part of a mass consciousness. Later on, Eliot is able to frame his individual images within a wider critical perspective.

Just as ‘Suppressed Complex’ coheres with the third Prelude, ‘Second Caprice in North Cambridge’, anticipates *The Waste Land* in urban scenes:

This charm of vacant lots!
The helpless fields that lie
Sinister, sterile and blind—
Entreat the eye and rack the mind,
Demand your pity.
With ashes and tins in piles,
Shattered bricks and tiles
And the debris of a city. (*IMH*, 15)

Contextually, these lines create an image of sterility and destruction of the city in a way that anticipates *The Waste Land*. The last two lines evoke the ephemeral city in ‘What the Thunder Said’: ‘What is the city over the mountains/ Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air/ Falling towers’ (*CPP*, 73). Interestingly, this poem shows that Eliot had the same bleak vision of the city from as early as 1909. Compared with Wordsworth’s poem ‘Composed Upon Westminster Bridge’ (1802), ‘Second Caprice’ stands at the opposite extreme. There is an image of serenity and calmness in Wordsworth’s poem as the city evokes deep psychological tranquillity: ‘Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie/ Open unto the fields, and to the Sky;
The cityscape is completely different. In terms of method, ‘Second Caprice’ attempts to develop shattered images of the city into a unified whole. It creates the seeds of the waste land image which Eliot develops later in *The Waste Land*. But though ‘Second Caprice’ can be conceived as an earlier stage of composing *The Waste Land*, there is a personal declarative voice that forces sentiments upon the reader.

Unlike ‘First Caprice in North Cambridge’, ‘Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse’ (1910) suggests a narrative form. The poem is characterised by complete sentences with clearly distinguishable links between them. Again, this poem, like ‘Suppressed Complex’, suggests an early stage of composition. In its context, ‘Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse’ presents images of streets and houses in winter and their influence on the observer’s mood and consciousness. The poem is narrated by an observer who walks the streets of the city in winter. The grimy urban milieu suggests the observer’s mental states and subjective emotions:

> We turn the corner of the street
  And again
  Here is a landscape grey with rain
  On black umbrellas, waterproofs,
  And slashing from the slated roofs
  Into a mass of mud and sand.
  Like mendicants without regrets
  For unpaid debts
  Hand in pocket, undecided,
  Indifferent if derided.

> Among such scattered thoughts as these
  We turn the corner of the street;
  But why are we so hard to please? (IMH, 14)

Eliot relies upon couplets to give weight to his expression and the personal interjections are superfluous to the visual scene. We are given the impression that Eliot wanders through the

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labyrinthine back-streets of an alien cityscape, but the form of the poem suggests that Eliot is a psychological outsider to the urban scene. This poem presents a form different from the other unpublished poems (a deformed sonnet in thirteen lines). The poem shows Eliot's first attempts to turn unpoetic material into the poetic. It develops, moreover, a prosaic, rather than poetic, style. The narrative description of the scene is reminiscent of Dickens's portrayal of London in his novels. It is noteworthy that the nature of the description of the street and the houses requires the poem's relatively long stanzaic form. The urban image of the first stanza required ten lines, while the last three lines function primarily as a coda to the poem. The answer to the rhetorical question at the end lies in the cityscape described at the beginning. Eliot did not publish the poem possibly because it is derivative. That is, the poem does not intensify the image in a distinctive poetic style. Rather, it dissolves into a prolonged tautological description of an unclear image. It is derivative in the sense that, like 'Humouresque' (1910) which is subtitled 'After J. Laforgue', it marks Eliot's attempt to master symbolist techniques derived from his reading of French poetry.

In terms of method, 'Fourth Caprice' collects 'scattered thoughts' of the poetic mind. The rhyme scheme of the couplets renders the poem traditional in form. It is noticeable that Eliot first wrote 'The Fire Sermon' in couplets, a form that Ezra Pound rejected, as the manuscripts of The Waste Land reveal. Eliot wrote later that

Pound '...induced me to destroy what I thought an excellent set of couplets'; for, said he, 'Pope has done this so well that you cannot do it better; and if you mean this as a burlesque, you had better suppress it, for you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope—and you can't'.

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This clearly discloses that Eliot tried to use traditional forms to articulate poetic content. Arguably, *The Waste Land* abandons this traditional form and the prolonged description of urban scenes, as in ‘Fourth Caprice’, employing instead succinct and condensed clusters of poetic urban images as in the image of the crowd under the brown fog in ‘The Burial of the Dead’, for instance.

In ‘Interlude in London’ (1911), Eliot presents Londoners enclosed within, indifferent to the elements without:

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We hibernate among the bricks
And live across the window panes
With tea and marmalade at six
Indifferent to what the wind does
Indifferent to sudden rains
Softening last year’s garden plots (IMH, 16)
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Again, the poem gives an impression that the poet is an insider to the city’s experiences, yet there remains a tension implied in the repeated word ‘indifferent’. The first line suggests a state of being closed-in within the warming shelter of the milieu but at the same time implies an unwillingness to merge with what seems a deadening emotional force. The speaker is depreciative of what gives a sense of belonging. This image of Londoners hibernating among the bricks compares interestingly with an image of Londoners in the manuscripts of *The Waste Land*: ‘London, your people is bound upon the wheel/ Phantasmal gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel!’ (*WLFT*, 43). Eliot does not picture Londoners as humans but as anonymous creatures hiding inside their places. He likens them to imaginary gnomes: dwarf creatures guarding their treasures. ‘Prufrock’ reiterates the image of lonely men inside their houses looking from the windows: ‘Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through the narrow streets/ And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes/ Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?’ (*CPP*, 26)
15). The similarity of the image in the two poems, one set probably in Boston and the other in London, suggests that Boston and London create within Eliot’s imagination the same urban experience. In 1960, Eliot remarked: ‘My urban imagery was that of St. Louis upon which that of Paris and London have been superimposed’. This statement is significant because it accounts for the complexity of Eliot’s urban imagery and the possibility of the new that emerges from mixing these images. The presence of these cities in Eliot’s mind suggests that it is not possible to speak of a refined urban experience or, to put it differently, American urban imagery in exclusive terms. The statement also reveals that Eliot’s urban images are palimpsestic, layered. The fact that Eliot emigrated from one country to another has widened his urban experience and made it generic.

The question of form in Eliot’s unpublished poetry should be measured against the form of the early published poems. Eliot’s early published poems exhibit new methods and techniques in terms of poetic imagery. For instance, ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’ (1915) presents another way of sequencing urban imagery. The form of the poem is organised according to a sequence set against a movement in space. The poem begins with a form of synthesis, a combination of thesis and anti-thesis and these might be temporal and spatial figurations. Unlike the unpublished poems, ‘Rhapsody’ shows an awareness of the relation between time and space. The spatial juxtaposition of street lamps creates a system of order in the observer’s sense of time. There is a series of mental expressions which form the protagonist’s response to several disconnected visual images. These mental images suggest the form of the poem where each stanza creates a specific image. The poem’s method lies in collecting pictures from the memory which collide with scenes from the street. Memory only throws up ‘a heap of broken images’ of distorted

objects. This reciprocity between the street and states of mind is given more intensity and emphasis by the spatial order of street lamps.

Like ‘Rhapsody’, ‘Preludes’ (1911) is organised according to four images one in Paris and three in Boston. These images are given order through the concept of time: the first and fourth are set in evening, the second and third in morning. The four preludes present visions of the city and urban life seen at different times of the day. The poem introduces a new psychological state through tracing thoughts of a woman who lives in a poor suburb of Boston lying in her bed staring at the ceiling onto which she projects sordid images from her mind. ‘As the street hardly understands’ is an image where subject and object are intimately related. It is an image of the individual dissolving into the outside material world which becomes part of the poet’s mind and feelings. The relation between subject and object, or individual and city, is underlined by T.E. Hulme when he wrote that, ‘Sometimes walking down an empty street at night one suddenly becomes conscious of oneself as a kind of eternal subject facing an eternal object. One gets a vague sentiment of being, as it were, balanced against the outside world and co-eternal with it.’ This passage suggests the prominence of subjectivity in early modernism, and the relation between the visual and the poetic. Underlying Hulme’s words is a feeling of how the outside world mirrors what is inside the individual. There is a sense of modern urban loneliness in Hulme’s statement, reflected by the ‘empty street’. The idea that the street is empty stresses the psychological state of the individual. The first line of ‘Prelude’ II, ‘the morning comes to consciousness’ expresses a feeling similar to Hulme’s, that the outside world is inseparable from the mind that perceives it.


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The difference between the early poems and *The Waste Land* lies in the idea of specificity and generality of the city. In Eliot’s early poems, the locale is a city we cannot name, as Hugh Kenner suggests in ‘The Urban Apocalypse’. It is either a city or several cities. It is significant to examine the concept of ‘specificity’ and ‘generality’ of the city in Eliot’s poetry because these two concepts form the basis of his urban experience. For example, ‘Preludes’ does not specify the city. However, the early drafts of ‘Preludes’ include a reference to Boston. The first Prelude was entitled ‘Prelude in Dorchester’, the second ‘Prelude in Roxbury’ (a suburb of Boston), the third ‘Morgendammerung’ (Dawn), and the forth ‘Abenddammerung’ (Twilight). ‘Preludes’ I, II, and IV were written in Boston, section III in Paris (Southam, 61). The removal of these specific names reveals Eliot’s intention to create a generic urban experience. The use of a general landscape or city slum helps him achieve a sense of impersonality as he moves from the subjective world of emotions and moods to a description of the sordid, dreary landscapes. Similarly, in ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’, the city is not identified; it is only suggested by the fact that it was written in Paris. From ‘Rhapsody’ we can discern that Eliot uses the city in order to reflect on his urban experience regardless of the specificity of the place or location. In other words, Eliot probably thought of revealing a poetic urban experience more than conveying a unique vision of a specific city. This view is contested and challenged in *The Waste Land* because it is impossible for a poet like Eliot who lived in different cities to see all cities as similar in terms of generating the poetic experience. The manuscripts of *The Waste Land* revealed the poem as a London poem. It reveals London not only as an imaginative space but also a space where Eliot actually lived and worked. This idea suggests that Eliot’s conception of

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the city throughout his poetic career has changed and that this change necessitated a different
response to the city in his subsequent poems.

Though the early poems differ from *The Waste Land* in that they present a generic city,
certain images and lines in the early poems recur, anticipating a cityscape similar to that of *The
Waste Land*. For example, the image from ‘Morning at the Window’: ‘The brown waves of fog
toss up to me/ Twisted faces from the bottom of the street’ (*CPP*, 27) suggests the image of the
crowd walking under the brown fog in the ‘Unreal City’ passage and the ‘yellow fog the rubs its
back upon the window-panes’ in ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’. Both images emphasise
the influence of the brown fog on the inhabitants, creating a miasmic atmosphere that makes the
scene sordid. But while the former (i.e. the image from ‘Morning at the Window’) involves the
speaker who observes these twisted faces, the latter tends to objectify the poetic experience
through description. The former dramatises, a Prufrockian technique, the latter solely describes.
This example suggests that Eliot was constantly seeking new ways of representing the city and
its aspects.

City fog is a recurrent symbol from ‘Prufrock’ and ‘Morning at the Window’ to *The
Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. This fog, a basic feature of Eliot’s cityscapes, symbolises man’s
inner psychic reality which is myopic, sterile and desolate. The image of the fog is possibly
inspired by Baudelaire’s yellow fog in ‘Les Sept Vieillards’ (The Seven Old Men) where the
‘dirty yellow steam filled all the space’ (*FE*, 179). The yellow fog impinges on the observer’s
vision of the real scene around him. In ‘Les Sept Vieillards’ Baudelaire writes: ‘One morning,
when in the dingy street the houses seemed to be stretched upwards by the mist’. Possibly ‘the
brown fog of a winter dawn’ in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* has a similar effect on the reality of the

26 Eliot’s image of fog here reminds us of the opening of Dickens’s *Bleak House* in which he depicts
London and Londoners shrouded by fog, dirt, and pollution.
onlooker's vision where the observer questions whether what he sees is reality or illusion. It shifts the observer's vision to a dream-like atmosphere. The unreality of Baudelaire's landscape must have interested Eliot immensely. The difference between Eliot's unreality and Baudelaire's unreality, however, is that Baudelaire's stresses the involvement of personal landscapes and emotions in an immoral world, while Eliot's use of landscape is notably literary and impersonal.

Eliot wrote about the reality of London in the sense that he lived and worked in it, making it imaginative in terms of reference to literature. From the early poetry to *The Waste Land* Eliot represents his sordid experience of the meaningless life in the city. This sordid experience is rooted in Eliot's feelings as an outsider, as an American expatriate living under the great impact of the modern British metropolis. This culminated in the vision of the 'unreal city' in *The Waste Land*.

Before examining Eliot's vision of the unreal city, it is necessary to trace what Baudelaire means to Eliot, because Baudelaire is one of the important Symbolists who strongly influenced Eliot's urban themes. Baudelaire's significance is suggested by Eliot's statement: 'If I hadn't discovered Baudelaire, and all the poetry that springs from him...I don't believe I would ever have been able to write.' There is no doubt that it was Baudelaire who gave Eliot the impetus of city poetry, but Eliot also acknowledged the influence of other French Symbolists, such as Laforgue, who are equally significant. The significance of Baudelaire to Eliot possibly lies in the fact that he showed a strong awareness of the city in his poetry.

Eliot was fascinated by Baudelaire's images of moral decay in the city and the phantasmagoric vision of city ghosts. This was the source of Eliot's critical and creative

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preoccupations which were centred on Baudelaire as early as 1907 or 1908. Eliot revealed later in 'What Dante Means to Me' (1950) that his city vision owes so much to nineteenth-century French poetry, particularly that of Baudelaire:

From Baudelaire I learned first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic. From him...I learned that the sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in America, could be the material for poetry; and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic. (TCTC, 126)

Eliot admits here that it is Baudelaire who showed him the way to turn his urban experience into poetry. Baudelaire’s influence on Eliot can be detected in the correlations between Baudelaire’s ‘Le Cygne’ (The Swan) and Eliot’s The Waste Land. Baudelaire’s poem anticipates The Waste Land mainly in its use of literary allusions, ideas of water, drought, myth, and the general melancholic outlook on urban life. Baudelaire’s poem starts with a figure from the past, Andromache, wife of the Trojan warrior Hector in the Iliad. Christopher McGowan suggests that Baudelaire is drawing largely on book III of Virgil’s Aeneid which tells the story of Andromache after the death of Hector and the fall of Troy. Baudelaire’s poem, then, like The Waste Land, establishes a link between contemporaneity and antiquity, present and past, by bringing them together. The past and the present are thus simultaneous, and this simultaneity suggests a spatial juxtaposition. Baudelaire’s technique must have caught Eliot’s eye when he read Tableaux Parisiens and remained with him until he read Joyce’s Ulysses. Baudelaire’s ‘Le Cygne’ presents images of water, of the sordidness of the desert, and of an obsession with rain. These ideas recur regularly in The Waste Land. In terms of form, Baudelaire’s poem presents three quatrains that exhibit a narrative description of the swan:
A swan, who had escaped from his captivity,
And scuffing his splayed feet along the paving stones,
He trailed his white array of feathers in the dirt.
Close by a dried out ditch the bird opened his beak,

Flapping excitedly, bathing his wings in dust,
And said, with heart possessed by lakes he once had loved:
‘Water, when will you rain? Thunder when will you roar?’
I see this hapless creature, sad and fatal myth,

Stretching the hungry head on his convulsive neck,
Sometimes towards the sky, like the man in Ovid’s book—
Towards the ironic sky, the sky of cruel blue,
As if he were a soul contesting with his God! (FE, 175)

This poem presents a romantic depiction of the swan which Eliot may have found unimpressive.
It is romantic because Baudelaire uses subjective emotions in his description of the swan’s problem. In this poem we notice Baudelaire’s strong perception of urban squalor and the image of the swan desperately seeking rain in the desert of a waste land. This parallel between Baudelaire’s poem and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* suggests that Eliot was not only influenced by the content of Baudelaire’s poem but also by its technique.

Through examining the city from Eliot’s early poetry to *The Waste Land*, we notice that the latter underlines Eliot’s change of perspective from the general to the specific i.e. from the general landscapes of his early poems to the specific locations of *The Waste Land*. This generality of the early poems might be explained by the tenets of Symbolism. One of these tenets is stated by Stéphane Mallarmé who wrote that: ‘To name the object is to destroy three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem’. Possibly Eliot did not specify the city in his early poetry for this reason. By the time Eliot wrote *The Waste Land*, he became aware that the specific landmarks and streets of London would have a stronger impression on the reader’s mind than if

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they were generalised. He wanted to reveal his specific urban experience of the city which he
found quite distinctive for its churches, streets, bridges, and social classes. Eliot probably
realised that if poetry should deal with urban images it should address the particular and not the
general. Therefore, it is unlikely that the influence of the French Symbolists, particularly
Baudelaire, could have led Eliot to be specific in his treatment of London because though
Baudelaire lived in Paris, his poetry does not reveal specific sites in Paris in the way Eliot’s
poetry does with London.

Arguably, Pound’s influence by the time Eliot was writing the draft of *The Waste Land*
seems to be stronger. In *The Waste Land* the specificity of the city is represented through a series
of images that record names of specific locations. The relation between the image and the
imaged object is one of the concerns of the imagists. Pound once remarked: ‘When words cease
to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish’.30 Here Pound uses one of
the images of *The Waste Land* which is the apocalyptic fall of civilisation. In *The Waste Land*,
specific locations dissolve into a desert of boredom and terror, creating a greater impact than if
the setting was general. The generic city of the early poems and the specificity of London in *The
Waste Land* suggest that Eliot was not able to formulate a clear urban vision of a specific city
due to the presence of a composite landscape in his mind, as he stated in ‘The Influence of
Landscape upon the Poet’: ‘My personal landscape is a composite’ (p, 421). Peter Barry
differentiates between ‘setting’ and ‘geography’, suggesting that setting is ‘generic’ while
geography is ‘loco-specific’. He concludes that *The Waste Land* uses urban geography rather
than just an urban setting, because it gives an account of the actual names of places, streets and

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30 See Ezra Pound, ‘Affirmations...VI, Analysis of This Decade,’ *New Age*, XVI (Feb. 11, 1915), 410.
districts. This observation is true but Eliot dissolves the specificity of the city in *The Waste Land* by universalising London and the type of urban experience it generates. Eliot’s urban experience is generic because he lived in various cities and this made it difficult to write of a particular locale that has greatly impinged upon his mind and created a palimpsest of memory. This process imbued Eliot with a strong awareness of the significance of landscapes and scenes which accumulate in the poet’s mind until they combine and produce a new experience.

The idea that Eliot writes of a specific city in *The Waste Land* requires a deeper analysis. Eliot may have been inspired by Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the use of specific details of the city. Both Eliot’s poem and Joyce’s novel envisage the city as a kind of encyclopaedia hinting at the idea that the modern mind must be equipped with knowledge of the culture and literature of the past. Monroe K. Spears summarises what Eliot must have learned from *Ulysses*:

Eliot must have learned, from *Dubliners* as well as *Ulysses*, how to use the city as a locus of [a] spatialized form and ‘two-plane’ writing...how to make realistic details resonate and suggest metaphors and allusions...and how to make one city a microcosm of all cities and of all life, as Dublin is in *Ulysses*.  

This quotation underlines that what Eliot learned from Joyce falls within the question of form and technique: the technique of incorporating specific details of locations and the spatial form. Spears’s note defines distinctive features in *The Waste Land*. These features account for the difference between Eliot’s early urban poetry and *The Waste Land*. Arguably, Eliot’s technique of incorporating specific references to London in *The Waste Land* is derived from his reading of *Ulysses*. Eliot published some chapters of *Ulysses* in the *Egoist* in 1919 and read the later

chapters of the novel in manuscript. In *Ulysses*, in ‘Proteus’ and ‘Hades’ episodes particularly, there are numerous references to specific places and streets in Dublin and other cities such as Paris where Joyce lived for several years: Leahy Street, Bride Street, the Liberties (a district in the middle of Dublin), March Library, Serpentine Avenue, Howth Island, Alexandria Library, MacMahon Bar, Rodot (a shop in Paris), Malahide (a village north of Dublin), Montmartre (a poor district in Paris), Old Kilkenny (a district on Nore river in south eastern Ireland), and River Nore. The abundance of place names in *Ulysses* foregrounds the idea that Joyce was not only remapping Dublin but was also questioning the boundaries between the imaginative city of the mind and the reality of the city in space and time. Like *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land* is a text that reveals this interrelation between the physical city (a record of some of its specific actual locations) and its imaginative presence (the unreal city of the mind).

Moreover, Eliot may have derived this recording of specific locations from his wide reading of the English tradition. In the manuscripts of *The Waste Land*, Pound wrote ‘Blake’ next to ‘King William Street’ and this implies that Eliot was probably following William Blake’s method of mentioning specific street names. *The Waste Land* marks a turning point in Eliot’s sensory appreciation of the city, suggesting more of a commitment to capturing its intimate texture. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot focuses on the sounds that emanate from the city in a manner reminiscent of Blake. In Blake’s ‘London’, it is the cries of infants and men that impinge on the speaker’s consciousness:

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I wander thro’ each charter’d street,
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
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In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

Here the metropolis appeals to the senses, namely 'seeing' and 'hearing'. Blake’s lines establish a grand voice that speaks of the great metropolis. The speaker of the poem travels like a flâneur through the city, commenting on its effect on his emotional and spiritual state. In the passage that begins with 'O City city' in *The Waste Land*, one cannot avoid noticing a Blakean voice speaking to the city. Eliot stresses in this passage what he later called the 'auditory imagination' where the speaker listens to the sounds of the city appealing to his senses:

O City city, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street
The pleasant whining of a mandolin
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold. (CPP, 69)

Eliot gives us an auditory as well as visual account of the city. The technique of apostrophe belongs to nineteenth-century poetics. According to Alan Marshall, in this passage the city is traced by the sound it makes, or by the sounds different parts of it make. Eliot is possibly derivative of Blake in terms of emphasising the sounds that emanate from the city which deeply impinge on the listener’s consciousness and emotions. Much of the vitality of Eliot’s stanza comes from his attempt to reveal that what we hear in the city are the voices of its past. Eliot balances the sordid reality of the city with what he hears from its past, as is the case when he juxtaposes a voice singing Spenser’s *Prothalamion* "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my

song' with the wind that '[c]rosses the brown land, unheard' (CPP, 67). Eliot is fascinated by the way the city creates in the mind of the inhabitant not only a visual impression but also an 'auditory imagination': 'To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears' (CCP, 79) (my italics). What these examples assert is that Eliot is not only attentive to the visual but also to the auditory, which distinguish the city as an artefact. The visual and the auditory could be seen here as forming the duality of art: 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.' The ephemeral can be equated with the auditory and the eternal with the visual. It is possible to see this duality in terms of time and space, where the transient, fleeting sounds of the city are measured against the city's eternal presence.

Furthermore, Eliot may have been inspired by Blake's cityscapes. In Blake's *Vala, or the Four Zoas*, there is a vision of a desert-like setting reminiscent of that of *The Waste Land*:

There is no City nor corn-field nor Orchard! All is
Rock & Sand
There is no Sun nor Moon nor Star but rugged wintry rocks
Justling together in the void suspended by inward fires
Impatience now no longer can endure. (Blake, 294)

This passage is quite impressive in its suggestion of a waste land and this is clearly reflected in Blake's vision of a desert landscape. It recalls *The Waste Land* with the same desolate landscape:

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water (CPP, 72)

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There are striking similarities particularly in the set of negations which each stanza presents. Eliot was probably inspired by Blake’s vision of a desert-like scene.

Eliot’s vision of the deterioration of civilisation in *The Waste Land* has affinities with Blake’s vision of the distressed cities in *Jerusalem*. In Eliot’s poem, modern and ancient cities are juxtaposed and their towers are falling: ‘Falling towers/ Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/ Vienna London/ Unreal’ (*CPP*, 73). London is prophesied as ‘fallen’, as an earthly Babylon. The juxtaposition of London with other Western cultural cities bespeaks the fate that it will undergo. This is Eliot’s prophetic vision of the city built by man. Eliot’s lines are reminiscent of Blake’s prophetic vision in *Jerusalem*. In plate 84, Blake writes:

> I see London blind and age-bent begging thro the Streets
> Of Babylon, led by a child, his tears run down his beard
> The voice of wandering Reuben ecchoes from street to street
> In all the Cities of the Nations Paris Madrid Amsterdam
> The Corner of Broad Street weeps; Poland Street languishes
> To Great Queen Street and Lincolns Inn, all is distress and woe. (*Blake*, 818)

Like Eliot, Blake not only juxtaposes European cities together (Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam) but also presents a dreary and desolate urban landscape. Blake presents the same bleak and depressing vision of London that we witness in *The Waste Land*. In Eliot’s passage, the idea of juxtaposing cities together suggests that Eliot interpreted the fate of London through the fate of these cities. In ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ Eliot suggests that tradition extends beyond Europe. London, in *The Waste Land*, represents the centres of civilisation because it is juxtaposed with Jerusalem, Athens, Vienna, and Alexandria. London is seen as a melting-pot, a
place that encompasses heterogeneous cultures. Eliot then emphasises cosmopolitanism which is one of the distinctive feature of modernism.\(^3^7\)

By juxtaposing London with ancient and modern cities, Eliot implies that London has become a global city encompassing heterogeneous cultures and languages. But London is also represented as an epitome for the decline of civilisation. In ‘The Burial of the Dead’ and ‘The Fire Sermon’, Eliot envisions London as an ‘unreal city’. Kristiaan Versluys provides three reasons as to why Eliot’s city is unreal:

Eliot’s city is unreal... because it is a generic city—an archetype of moral desiccation. Secondly, the city is unreal because—unnaturally—the course of the year is that of the seasons; and winter, spring or autumn are all equally dead and deadening. Thirdly, the unreality consists of a thorough and total perversion: the bizarreness of human attachments robs the urbanite of everyday sanity... [T]he unreality, moreover, is not a social but a psychological and metaphysical one.\(^3^8\)

Versluys’s comment captures the essence of the poem, but Eliot is writing about London and so the city, at a certain level, is not generic; what Versluys means by the generic city is that it reflects the moral and ethical problems of human life. Versluys goes on to align ‘unreality’ with the insanity of human and social relations.

In fact, the manuscripts of *The Waste Land* offer us a better interpretation of the meaning of the ‘unreal city’. In the manuscripts the ‘unreal city’ occurs twice and in both occurrences they are connected with the speaker’s vision: ‘Unreal city, I have seen and see’ (*WLFT*, 9, 31). The first-person pronoun is problematic for it is unidentified. But the two tenses in the line (i.e. the present perfect and the present simple) indicate that the speaking voice is that of someone


who relates the present with the immediate past. The line could have been spoken by Tiresias. The second ‘unreal city’ passage occurs immediately before Tiresias speaks. If we accept that ‘I’ refers to Tiresias then the image or the adjective (unreal) is justified. Eliot wrote that ‘What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem’ (CPP, 78). Tiresias is a blind prophet and this suggests that he can only see the city figuratively. The city is unreal because for Tiresias it can only be imagined. What Tiresias sees is a representation of the city as a collection of fragments and voices. Tiresias then reflects Eliot’s vision of the fragments of the poem. Eliot reanimates himself in the figure of Tiresias. Tiresias’ urban experience at the heart of the metropolis reflects Eliot’s experience as an outsider, as someone who sees not the reality of the city but its unreality. In the first ‘unreal city’ passage, Eliot first wrote ‘Terrible City’ to evoke the shocking experience of what the speaker sees afterwards:

Unreal
Terrible City/, I have sometimes seen and see
Under the brown fog of your winter dawn
A crowd flow over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many. (WLFT, 9)

The omitted word ‘terrible’ suggests that the city is unattractive. It is a ‘Terrible City’ because Tiresias sees a vision of hell through the crowd under the brown fog over London Bridge. Eliot seems hesitant whether to attribute this vision of hell directly to Tiresias, because the scene calls for a real observer and not a mythical blind prophet. What is the significance of the brown fog for the blind Tiresias? This may explain why Eliot omitted the words ‘I have sometimes seen and see’.

The phrase, ‘unreal city’, moreover, poses a question about the reality of the city. Eliot’s recoil from the city towards some higher or ideal city where order and coherence prevail
suggests a Platonic philosophy. It is also reminiscent of visionary romantics such as Blake whose poetry often reveals a tension between Earthly and Heavenly Cities. Blake’s urban vision is always charged with the tension between the New Jerusalem, the perfect ideal city, and his indignant vision of earthly Babylon. These two cities are reconciled by the power of Blake’s poetry, since Albion views both Jerusalem and Babylon. Eliot wrote in his dissertation of this opposition between the real and the unreal – that the concept of ‘unreality’ depends upon a notion of reality: ‘We only say that an object is unreal with respect to something else which we declare to have been affirmed at the same time and which continues to be real while the other does not.’ The simultaneity of the two suggests a form of spatial juxtaposition. Both real and unreal objects exist simultaneously in the mind of the poet even if Eliot does not mention one of them. Thus when Eliot speaks of the ‘unreal city’, he is measuring it against its Other, the real city to which he aspires. It might be the heavenly city of Plato’s Republic. In the second ‘unreal city’ stanza, which presents the meeting with Mr. Eugenides, Eliot wrote in the manuscripts: ‘Not here, O Glaucon, but in another world’ (WLFT, 31). According to Valerie Eliot’s editorial notes, Eliot may be alluding to a passage from Book IX of Plato’s The Republic:

‘I understand,’ he [Glaucon] said: ‘you mean the city whose establishment we have described, the city whose home is in the idea; for I think it can be found nowhere on earth. ‘Well’, said I [Socrates], ‘perhaps there is a pattern of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen...’ (WLFT, 128)

This dialogue between Glaucon (Plato’s brother) and Socrates (Plato’s teacher) inspired Eliot who had philosophical and religious interests. Behind Eliot’s interest in the heavenly city is St Augustine’s City of God, a text that explores the spiritual message of Christianity. Eliot measures


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the modern city against the City of God. The presence of the City of Man and the City of God in Eliot’s mind can be linked with the poem’s technique. According to Levenson, the poem collocates in order to culminate. It collocates two cities, one real and the other imagined or unreal. In other words, Eliot’s unreal London, from which the inhabitants wish to escape, co-exists with his vision of the heavenly city towards which the poem points.

Moreover, the first ‘unreal city’ stanza, in ‘The Burial of the Dead’, reveals the influence of imagism. Though Eliot was studying philosophy at Harvard University when imagism flourished between 1912 and 1917, arguably he was influenced by its tenets through Ezra Pound whom he met in Paris in 1914. In *The Waste Land*, the juxtaposition of the image of the crowd over London Bridge, which alludes to Dante’s image of the infernal city, with Baudelaire’s image of city ghosts reveals Eliot’s imagistic technique. The two images fuse into one through which Eliot articulates his vision of the reality of modern urban society doomed for its daily routine. London is represented in terms of social space through the image of the crowd. The city’s physical space becomes a mental one through the poetic image. Eliot associates the crowd going to their work with a literary image, that of the crowd walking in Dante’s *Inferno*.

*The Waste Land* is imagistic in method. Eliot structures the poem through the juxtaposition of images and scenes. The form of *The Waste Land* as a plethora of disconnected, fragmentary images reflects the modern city that generates multiple visual impressions. As Ezra Pound pointed out in his comment on *The Waste Land*, ‘in a city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are “cinematographic”’ (Quoted by Timms, 3). This is an important comment for it stresses how the modern city influences the poet’s mind and senses. This succession of rapid images changes the way the city is perceived and calls for a new way of

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perception, a new awareness. Eliot was trying to record what Virginia Woolf suggested in her essay ‘Modern Fiction’ (1919):

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms...Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.41

This passage reflects Woolf’s stream of consciousness which coheres significantly with Eliot’s theory of poetic experience: ‘The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images’ (SP, 41). Both writers allude to the forces that shape the modern mind and the attempt to depict the reality of everyday life by representing exactly how the human mind works and develops. The modern mind, as depicted in the works of modernists, works spatially because it collects impressions and perceptions. The city becomes ‘unreal’ for the observer because it is experienced as a dream, as a series of disconnected images. Again, this idea recalls Georg Simmel’s study of the mind of the modern inhabitant which is open to various social and cultural forces.

Eliot stresses that the experience of the inhabitant in the city is one of isolation, despair, and loneliness. He invites us to compare his unreal city with Baudelaire’s phantasmagoric scene:

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!42

42 This is translated as Swarming city, city full of dreams, where ghosts in broad-daylight accost the passerby.
Eliot's unreal city is also Baudelaire's city, but Eliot's city is given more force and intensity through the literary allusions to Dante. So what the reader gets is a composite image of an intensified feeling. In this sense Eliot's city is ahistorical and atemporal, dissolving any sense of time and space. The city enables him to borrow from remote authors in time (thus bridging the gap between the present and the past) and in space where London becomes a synecdoche for other cities such as Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna. In *The Waste Land*, London is mythologized when Tiresias becomes an inhabitant of the modern waste land. Here Eliot transcends the boundaries which become tenuous between reality and imagination, space and time, present and past, contemporaneity and antiquity. This places Eliot's city in a wider context giving it a predominantly universal aspect. This idea is related to the argument concerning *The Waste Land*’s specificity which I discussed earlier. It is as if Eliot is combining the generality of the city of his early poetry with the specificity of the city in *The Waste Land*. Eliot's genius in *The Waste Land* is manifest in making the specific resonate with the universal.

The idea of juxtaposing literary images brings us to examine the relation between literary allusions and the city. Unlike *The Waste Land*, some of Eliot’s early poems hardly use literary allusions (except in their epigraphs), while other poems may use them implicitly. Eliot formulated his vision of the city through his wide reading of literature. In *The Waste Land*, literary allusions give a shape and significance to the modern experience of London by re-identifying it with texts and images the reader is already familiar with. Eliot felt that modern London is better revealed through the perceptive visions of Baudelaire and Dante. The crowd who flowed over London Bridge reverberate with realistic and symbolic meanings. In the context of *The Waste Land*, Baudelaire's vision of the swarming city is made universal because it is one among the other literary allusions that reveal the modern experience of the city.
There is, then, reciprocity between Eliot's London and the allusions to Baudelaire and Dante: the experience of living in London invokes literary allusions which, in turn, intensify the feeling of Eliot's London. That is, the London of *The Waste Land* creates, and is created by, these literary borrowings which corroborate Eliot's 'conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written' (*SP*, 40). In 'Philip Massinger' (1920), Eliot makes clear that it is the unique feeling which the poet tries to instil in the reader: 'The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn.... A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest' (*SP*, 153). Consequently, for Eliot good poetry is poetry that borrows, poetry that builds on the poetry of the past. London is unreal possibly because it is haunted by the literary visions of the past. Eliot's vision of London builds on Baudelaire's and Dante's visions, and the genius of the poem lies in its power to bridge images of the modern city with literary associations while retaining, at the same time, its self-referentiality. *The Waste Land* is a self-referential text in that it is a text about itself, a text that questions the kind and nature of poetry it presents.

In *The Waste Land*, Baudelaire's and Dante's visions may function as an 'objective correlative' to the emotion the inhabitant feels in London. In 'Hamlet' (1919), Eliot writes that 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion' (*SP*, 48). In the 'unreal city' passage, for example, which exhibits Eliot's impersonal method, Eliot does not state his emotions about modern London but constructs instead an image that combines Baudelaire and Dante as a way to express this emotion. The reader is convinced and moved by the image because Eliot successfully employs in the scene an 'objective correlative'. Eliot, according to this, has found a situation (the emotion we get from
Baudelaire's and Dante's visions) which acts as a formula for the emotion that the reader gets from the 'unreal city' scene. It is as if Eliot is suggesting that London is inseparable from its literary context.

In 'What Dante Means to Me', Eliot states clearly the purpose of quoting Dante in The Waste Land: 'Certainly I have borrowed lines from him [Dante], in the attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind the memory, of some Dantesque scene, and thus establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life' (TCTC, 128). Arguably, from Eliot's statement we discern that the function of literary allusion is similar to that of myth, for myth also establishes a relation between contemporaneity and antiquity, as Eliot stated in 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth' (1923). It follows that literary allusions give order and significance to the poetic images of the past and shape our conception of modern urban experience. So Eliot's use of images of Baudelaire and Dante recalls Joyce's method of creating a parallel between the Homeric text and modern Dublin.

The manuscripts of The Waste Land reveal Eliot's vision of the city particularly in the omitted stanzas between the 'unreal city' and the passage in which Tiresias speaks. Pound did not find these stanzas impressive:

London the swarming life you kill and breed,
Huddled between the concrete and the sky;
Responsive to the momentary need,
Vibrates unconscious to its formal destiny,
Knowing neither how to think nor how to feel
But lives in the awareness of the observing eye
London, your people is bound upon the wheel!
Phantasmal gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel!!

Some mind, aberrant from the normal equipoise
(London your people is bound upon the wheel!!)
Record the motions of these pavement toys
And trace the cryptogram that may be curled
Within these faint perceptions of the noise,
Of the movement, and the lights! (WLFT, 31)

London in this passage ‘kills and breeds’ and ‘lives in the observing eye’. The above-quoted stanzas, which reveal Baudelaire’s influence in terms of personifying the city, recalls the strategy Eliot used in the unpublished poems particularly in the way he addresses the city directly. The phrase ‘Swarming city’ is Baudelairean. The word ‘phantasmal’, which is synonymous with spectral, suggests Baudelaire’s ghostly crowd. Though these stanzas did not appear in the final version of the poem, Eliot left their imprints on other passages as is the case when he quotes Baudelaire’s city ghosts.

Pound advised Eliot to remove these stanzas possibly because they repeat or elaborate Baudelaire’s image of the swarming city. Moreover, the stanzas show a Baudelairean rhyme-scheme. The use of rhyming couplets was notable in the early poems and even in the drafts of The Waste Land. Arguably, Pound – who urged modern poets to revolutionise poetry and make it new – found the lines unimpressive and obsolete due to Eliot’s use of prosopopoeia. Eliot attributes to the city human actions. Yet, the lines seem to exert a strong influence on Eliot’s mind. For Eliot, the power of Baudelaire’s poetic response to Paris lies in the idea of presenting the city as it is and yet making it represent something more than itself:

It is not merely in the use of imagery of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to the first intensity—presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself—that Baudelaire has created a mood of release and expression for other men. (SP, 234)

This passage provides another reason why Pound advised Eliot to remove the lines that describe the swarming city. In the stanzas quoted above, Eliot’s description of London does not elevate
the imagery to what Eliot calls 'the first intensity'. One of the ways in which poetry achieves such intensity is through charging the image with symbols. Eliot complicates his imagery by endowing them with more than one meaning. The quoted stanzas above do not achieve this because they are merely descriptive. They lack the other dimension that makes them symbolic. Eliot presents the image as it is but it does not represent something other than itself.

Baudelaire must have influenced Eliot in terms of personification because Baudelaire uses this technique abundantly in his poems. In 'Les Aveugles' (The Blind), written in quatrains, Baudelaire personifies the city: ‘O city! while you laugh and roar and play, /Mad with your lusts to point of cruelty, /Look at me! dragging, dazed more than their kind’ (FE, 187, 189). The technique used in these lines resembles Eliot’s personified London. Eliot possibly wanted to present a unique vision of London using Baudelaire’s technique of personification.

In his early poetry, Eliot was always seeking new modes for expressing urban content. The early poems can be read as attempts at presenting urban images in a new style and form. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot presents another way of sequencing urban imagery and this is related to the poem’s long form. The multiplicity of fragmented images calls for a new way of organizing poetic images and thus a new way of comprehending and reading the poem. This new way can be related to the poem’s spatial form. Though Joseph Frank does not use ‘space’ in the literal sense in his essay ‘Spatial Form in Modern Literature’ and space for him is textual, the relation between the concept of time and space, which Eliot’s poems deal with, could be related to Eliot’s representation of London in *The Waste Land*. In the following section I will argue that Joseph Frank’s concept of ‘spatial form’ as a method of interpretive reading and textual organization is closely related with *The Waste Land*’s representation of the city and urban images.
ii. Spatial Form and *The Waste Land*

*The Waste Land* marks a new phase in Eliot’s poetic treatment of the city mainly because of the poem’s spatial form. For Levenson, the main argument in Joseph Frank’s essay ‘Spatial Form in Modern Literature’ is that modernists characteristically sought to replace temporal with spatial form (Levenson, 200). The concept of ‘spatial form’ suggests that elements of the poem are perceived next to one another rather than following from one to the other. Frank reads *The Waste Land* with respect to spatial elements rather than through a linear movement in time. If we take the concept of ‘space’ literally, we find that the poem’s spatiality can be seen in its sudden shifts from one place to another. In the poem place is not merely a background or setting. The first 18 lines, for instance, move spatially from the ‘dead land’, to ‘Starnbergersee’ to the ‘Hofgarten’, and then to ‘the mountains’. Actions and objects are identified according to space, as in: ‘A crowd over London Bridge so many[…] Flowed up the hill and down King William Street, / To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours’ (*CPP*, 62). In this image, Eliot produces space through the movement of the crowd from one location to another. Eliot focuses on certain places, juxtaposing them spatially in order to create a movement in space. The three places mentioned are distinctive areas in London and so we get an image of a specific location through the juxtaposition of these places. Spatial form then can be seen in terms of poetry that deals with geographical space.

The question of spatial form suggests a relation between the city and form. In ‘The Cities of Modernism’, Malcolm Bradbury states that ‘[m]odernist writing has a strong tendency to encapsulate experience within the city, and to make the city-novel or the city-poem one of its

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43 This article was first published in *Sewanee Review* 53 (Spring, Summer, Autumn 1945) and was revised and republished in Joseph Frank, *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963).
main forms’ (Bradbury, 100). This statement underlines the significance of the city in modernist writing. This awareness sheds light on ways of imagining the city through visual images. The idea that ‘the city is analogous to form’, as Bradbury remarks, suggests that modernist writers sought new ways for expressing the city, where the way the poem’s elements are ordered suggest a spatiality as if these elements are juxtaposed in space.

Spatial form is concerned with the way poetry can be read. Ways of reading modern poetry are different from ways of reading nineteenth-century romantic poetry. Modern poems may employ a variety of complex images which are not necessarily organised in a chronological way. In modern poetry, in light of Frank’s theory of spatial form, though our reading develops sequentially, our apprehension of the poem’s images and symbols does not develop in a similar way. This is because modern poetry violates the rules of syntax and may stress visual, imagistic, and spatial order in lieu of the sequential and chronological one. The spirit of a new treatment of the city started with poets and novelists of the fin de siècle who ‘embodie[d] a new use of urban material, and that however different their attitudes and practices may be, the city has at last become for them a conceptual form.’

Ezra Pound’s idea of ‘direct treatment of the thing’ involves the use of images when dealing with spatially observed objects. Images refer, as Peter Jones rightly points out, solely to the visual sense and to pictorial impression. This sense of a visual, pictorial impression reveals a strong relation between the mind that observes and the object observed. The relation between images and real objects calls for a degree of specificity because it is difficult to imagine an object in generic terms. Images have to be specific in order to create a mental image in the reader’s mind. In The Waste Land, Eliot’s imagistic technique presents London through condensed images that are not connected but collected. Eliot’s urban

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images naturally derive from direct perception of, or contact with, the urban scene. In this sense *The Waste Land* is a poem that deals with a particular sense of reality and this is achieved by means of a particular use of images. Peter Jones quotes the following from a ‘Preface to Some Imagist Poets’ (1915): ‘we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous’ (Jones, 137).

Space in *The Waste Land* is created out of visual images. And when we examine these images we examine Eliot’s way of arranging them. Spatial form refers to stylistic and structural features (i.e. how the elements are organised) and to ways of reading poetry. The difficulty of reading *The Waste Land* comes from Eliot’s use of the spatial form which compels the reader to reread the lines and to revise his/her apprehension. The reader will soon be aware of repetitions which create a spatial pattern. For example, in ‘What the Thunder said’ Eliot writes:

Here is no water but only rock  
Rock and no water and the sandy road  
The road winding above among the mountains  
Which are mountains of rock without water  
Among the rock one cannot stop and drink [...]  
If there were water  
And no rock  
If there were rock  
And also water  
And water  
A spring  
A pool among the rock (*CPP*, 72)

These lines create a spatial pattern through the repetition of words like ‘rock’ and ‘water’ which obliges the reader to re-examine the connections and to question the relation between these repetitions. This passage violates the common rules of syntax as understood by the ordinary reader. Reading these lines requires that the reader should hold all the lines in his mind in order to grasp the relation between these word groups. The spatial form is manifest in that these lines
do not follow sequentially or consecutively but spatially; they are juxtaposed in a way as to create a spatial scheme. As David Moody acutely suggests, *The Waste Land* should be read according to a pattern other than the sequential:

At first reading *The Waste Land* is likely to appear a sequence of unrelated fragments. Gradually one learns to make some sense of the sequence, to see how one passage follows from another. But to read the poem straight through from start to finish still won’t give a clear sense that it all coheres—that it all really 'works'. I suspect that the poem begins to work and be whole only when we perceive that it has a structure other than the sequential. Just because the separate passages are not obviously related, they become free to form a variety of connections among themselves. If instead of taking them in their simple sequence, one after another, one holds them simultaneously together before the mind’s eye, then they may form an arrangement in space more complex than any possible in time alone.  

Moody’s statements significantly allude to the spatial structure of *The Waste Land* which is achieved by rejecting a sequential or temporal method. Readers are used to reading poems sequentially (proceeding from beginning to end) with a view to creating a temporal understanding. *The Waste Land* defies the reader’s expectations by rejecting traditional ways of reading. Modernist poetry moves away from the sequential pattern by establishing another dimension of poetic form. Although this sequential pattern of reading appears at the surface, *The Waste Land* postulates that there is an underlying pattern beneath its surface. Thus, spatial form in the poem requires a special reading. The complexity of juxtaposing elements in space may account for the difficulty of reading and understanding the poem. In his use of spatial form, Eliot showed not only how modernist poetry should be written but also how it should be read and understood.

The purpose of studying spatial form is to formulate a consistent and coherent interpretation of the strategies used in modernist poetry. *The Waste Land* is more than a group of

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disconnected fragmentary units. The question of the unity of Eliot’s poem collides with its spatial form because this form is concerned with how fragments, characters, and objects are juxtaposed or paralleled together, while unity, which is achieved by Tiresias who unites all the voices, as Eliot wrote in his notes, postulates a form of ‘melting’, of joining characters together to form one unit. If characters are part of the structural method of the poem, then unity is problematic because all the characters are moving towards a unity rather than being juxtaposed together spatially or forming a relation among one another. The idea of unity contrasts with The Waste Land as a ‘polyphonic’ poem. Eliot’s original title of The Waste Land, ‘He Do the Police in Different Voices’, suggests a heroic attempt to bring together or unify dissimilar voices. This means that The Waste Land was perceived by Eliot as a collage of different voices juxtaposed together polyphonically.

One solution to the previous problem is to suggest that the unity of The Waste Land is spatial rather than temporal and this can be gleaned from examining Eliot’s ‘mythical method’. According to Kilinkowitz, ‘[t]he Modernists transformed experience into myth—for which, as Frank says, historical time does not exist.’47 Myths are timeless. The idea that ‘historical time does not exist’ in myth means that there is more emphasis on the story itself outside its temporal scope. Eliot’s essay ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ (1923) poses the question of why the ‘mythical method’ contrasts with the ‘narrative method’. For Eliot the two methods (i.e. narrative and mythic) oppose each other. The first relates to sequence, the second to juxtaposition. In the narrative method, time sequence is significant and the poem or novel is organised according to a temporal structure. In the mythic method time does not figure prominently and space is given more precedence. William Holtz notes that: ‘Spatial form...grows out of the writer’s attempt to

negate the temporal principle inherent in language and to force apprehension of his work as a
total "thing" in a moment of time rather than as a sequence of things." This statement provides
an answer as to why Eliot contrasts the two methods. Eliot attempts to negate the temporal so
that he can establish a spatial order. Eliot's task 'of giving a shape and significance to the
immense panorama of futility and anarchy' of contemporary history is a spatial one because
writers can only do that through the mythical method.

Eliot makes time ahistorical by relating the present to the past. This process is seen in the
mythic figure, Tiresias, who inhabits the modern world of London. Tiresias embodies time (past,
present, and future). He is not fixed by time or in time. He moves in time from the past to the
present and in space from ancient Greece to modern London. Time, in Tiresias, is timeless. In
*Burnt Norton*, Eliot writes: ‘Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future,
/ And time future contained in time past’ and ‘What might have been and what has been/ Point to
one end, which is always present’ (*CPP*, 171, 172). These lines clearly state Eliot’s attempt to
fuse time past with time present in order to give precedence to space. Seeing time past, time
present and time future as simultaneous allows Eliot to stress the complexity and spatiality of the
image. Consequently, we can conclude that if Tiresias transcends time so that he can be an
inhabitant of contemporary London and if time in myth is ahistorical, then the unity that Eliot
suggests can be considered spatial. The idea that Tiresias transcends time possibly suggests that
time is not spatial but spatialized. J. Hillis Miller contends that:

Human time in Eliot’s early poetry has the same qualities as subjective space. There is
often a spontaneous spatialization of time, so that a poem exists in a perpetual present.
The simultaneity of parts is guaranteed by the fact that past, present, and future exist at
once for the imprisoned ego. The reader must hold all the images of a poem in his mind
at once, and set each against the others in order to apprehend the full meaning.  

Miller is right in proposing that if a poem is to exist in the present, time must be spatialized so that our reading of the poem will not focus on time sequence but on assimilating all the images of the poem at once (as is the case in *The Waste Land*). This process of assimilation is part of the 'spatial form'. Because the temporality of reading cannot be overcome, spatiality has to be foregrounded. Spatiality is intrinsic in *The Waste Land*'s development of a visual imagistic method. Pound's definition of the image stresses the spatiality, rather than the temporality, of the image: 'an image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' (Quoted by Jones, 39). Underlying Pound's definition of the image is the idea that in order to present the image spatially, time has to be instantaneous, though, of course, we have to read the poem sequentially.

Different critics emphasised the fragmentary aspect of *The Waste Land* but this does not mean that Eliot composed the poem without a meaningful pattern in mind. Michael Levenson offers a spatial, linguistic reading of *The Waste Land* and how the opening lines of the poem are structured:

April is the cruelest month, *breeding*
Lilacs out of the dead land, *mixing*
Memory and desire, *stirring*
Dull roots with spring rain.

5 Winter kept *us* warm, *covering*
Earth in forgetful snow, *feeding*
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised *us*, coming over the *Starnbergersee*
With a shower of rain; *we* stopped in the colonnade,

10 *And* went on in the sunlight, into the *Hofgarten*
*And* drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
*Bin* gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And *when* we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,
My cousin's, he took *me* out on a sled,

15 *And* I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. *And* down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
*I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.*

Levenson argues that although lines 1-6 are linked by present participles, lines 5-18 by the personal pronouns, lines 8-12 by the use of German, and lines 10-16 by the reiteration of the conjunction ‘and’—the problem is that ‘we have no single common feature connecting all the lines’ (Levenson, 171). What Levenson suggests here is that although stylistic and syntactic features are provided, the lines have no logical connection. Temporal and grammatical cohesive devices exist only at the surface. These lines should be read spatially, that is, in terms of how words or word-groups are juxtaposed together. What Levenson sees is a structural scheme. Reading the poem’s opening lines in terms of a sequential pattern does not develop the reader’s understanding of the poetic technique. There is, then, another pattern, a spatial pattern that helps us see how the poem defeats any sequential reading. We can discern that there is a tension between these two patterns. Eliot’s aim, as Joseph Frank argues, is ‘to undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language, frustrating the reader’s expectation of a sequence and forcing him to perceive the elements of the poem as juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time.’ In this sense, *The Waste Land* shows an aspect that is different from other poems in modernist writing. It reveals a new way of assimilating and reading the poem’s fragmented parts which are heavily dependent on the concept of spatiality.

Understanding the poem’s imagistic technique is vital to the concept of spatiality. *The Waste Land’s* technique has much in common with a technique used in films, i.e. montage. The poem explores London and the lives of its people through a juxtaposition of images, glimpses of people’s lives, scenes, and fragments. It is similar to a cinematic montage where scenes are

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edited and arranged in a particular order without any transition or connective device, or without preparing the reader for shifts in scene, voice, or situation. Ezra Pound notes that since the poem explores the city and its visual impressions, the poem’s technique is ‘cinematographic’: ‘In a city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are “cinematographic”’ (Quoted by Timms, 3). Pound’s statement is a good example of the reciprocity between city and form. What the inhabitant of the big city experiences is a nexus of visual impressions that influences his life and attitude to the modern city. What Pound meant by ‘cinematographic’ is that though these visual impressions may have a linear sequence, this sequence may not possess some attributes such as logical coherence. Cinematography then can be associated with the concept of ‘spatial form’.

_The Waste Land_’s technique also resembles a technique used in pictorial art, i.e. collage. ‘Collage’ is an artistic term for combining different materials. Eliot uses collage by bringing a mixture of allusions, references, quotations, and foreign expressions. The way _The Waste Land_ dispenses with narrative links forces the structure of the poem to be conceived as a collage of fragments. In painting, this technique was used by Picasso and Braque. Cubists, Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists also used it in their work. This technique can be related to the attempt in art to represent objects in a three-dimensional space in order to attain reality. Just as the human eye sees the three-dimensionality of the object, art strives to depict objects in a similar way. Cubist paintings show objects from various angles and positions. Painters like Picasso and Braque tried to depict the three-dimensionality of the object in the two-dimensional canvas. Picasso’s technique of collage is considered a revolution in painting. It departs from the traditional way of seeing objects, which is characterised by a fixed point of view in favour of a new method that depicts painted objects from several sides and angles. In poetry, collage then is
a spatial form. It is a mode of representation, denoting a disjointed poetic discourse that works through the assemblage of fragments rather than through a linear development. Eliot was interested in Cubism because it creates order among the objects that are spatialized: ‘Artists are constantly impelled to invent new difficulties for themselves; cubism is not licence but an attempt to establish order.’

One of the passages that best illustrates Eliot’s technique of collage in *The Waste Land* is in ‘The Burial of the Dead’. The passage that describes the ‘Unreal City’ brings together Baudelaire’s image of city ghosts, Dante’s vision of hell, places in contemporary London, a literary allusion to Webster’s play *The White Devil*, Baudelaire’s preface to *Fleurs du Mal*, a reference to the Punic wars between the Romans and the Carthaginians, and finally a reference to the resurrection of Osiris, the fertility god in ancient Egyptian myth. In this passage, Eliot spatializes disparate fragments together. The purpose of this spatial juxtaposition is to create a new literary reality that depends on the relation between these fragments. This juxtaposition also reveals the poet’s awareness of the past through which the present can be evaluated. Spatial juxtaposition of disparate and different fragments may help to interpret the present in terms of the past and to recreate a reality that can be seen out of this juxtaposition.

Another example that shows this meaningful technique of spatial juxtaposition is in ‘The Fire Sermon’, where Eliot juxtaposes the Buddhist Fire Sermon with St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. In *The Waste Land*’s endnotes to line 309, Eliot wrote: ‘The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident’ (*CPP*, 79). This reveals a poetic method, the ‘collocation’ of carefully organised fragments, rather than an incoherent pastiche juxtaposed randomly without any sense of order. Levenson formulated his opinion out of Eliot’s note, arguing that this is

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the way the poem works: it collocates in order to culminate. It offers us fragments of consciousness, 'various presentations to various viewpoints,' which overlap, interlock, 'melting into' one another to form emergent wholes. The poem is not, as it is common to say, built upon the juxtaposition of fragments; it is built out of their interpretation. Fragments of the Buddha and Augustine combine to make a new literary reality which is neither the Buddha nor Augustine but which includes them both. (Levenson, 190)

Though Levenson does not explain how these statements can be applied to the poem, looking at the fragments of section one, for example, may clarify the point. These fragments are unified by the general theme of the poem which is spiritual and physical death. At the surface the fragments do not seem to connect. However, their underlying contexts do: the title, 'The Burial of the Dead', refers to the burial service of the Anglican Church, 'arch-duke' (line 13) refers to the assassination of Ferdinand of Austria in 1914, 'handful of dust' refers to the biblical idea that man's body comes from dust and returns to dust, 'Hyacinthus' refers to the Greek legend in which the flower, hyacinthus, sprang from the blood of the slain youth Hyacinthus, the Phoenician Sailor relates to the eastern myth of death and resurrection of the vegetation god Thammuz, 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' comes from Ariel's song in Shakespeare's The Tempest, which laments the death of Ferdinand's father by drowning, 'The Hanged Man' comes from Frazer's The Golden Bough in which the hanged man is sacrificed to ensure regeneration of fertility, and so on. The point to be made here is that there is a web of contextual connections below the seemingly disconnected fragments. In other words, these fragments, though unrelated and dissimilar at the surface, interconnect through their contexts which emphasise the general theme of death. This web of connections links thematically with Eliot's vision of the city and the urban crowd in the modern metropolis. Bernard Bergonzi is right in suggesting that 'London, in The Waste Land, is rather like an archaeological site. Just below the surface of the poem and of the city in the poem there are fragments of intertextual reference and allusion' (Bergonzi, 94).
This observation adds another aspect to the poem, that of depth. In a sense, the reader is not only reading Eliot’s spatial juxtaposition of elements but also going beneath the surface to uncover a palimpsestic text.

Thus the surface of the poem does not help the reader decipher the various disconnected images of the poem; it conceals the true nature of the text. This recalls Wolfgang Iser’s idea that ‘acts of comprehension are guided by the structures of the text’.

Understanding the text depends heavily on understanding its spatial and textual structure. According to Derrida, ‘a text is a text only if it conceals, from the first glance, from the first comer, the law of its composition and the rules of its game.’ Indeed, this is the way *The Waste Land* works. It deconstructs connectives in order to repeat its theme. The reader’s task is to dig up the text and uncover the pattern that governs the text underneath. In this sense *The Waste Land* resembles, in technique, Iain Sinclair’s *Lights Out for the Territory*, as I will reveal later, where we see the flâneur uncovering the text that lurks beneath the city’s surface text. *The Waste Land* should be looked at in its totality (as if we are observing a map) in order to grasp how it forms a web of contextual connections. In *The Waste Land*, there is a plethora of signifiers that construct the space of the poem. When these signifiers are repeated in other sections, they merge with other signifiers and symbols. These signifiers do not operate on the surface but through thematic, contextual, and structural interrelatedness.

Eliot’s principle of juxtaposition works in terms of simultaneity, similarity, and contrast. For example, he juxtaposes spatially the city and the desert in an attempt to construct a unified vision. W.H. Auden contrasts these romantic, Christian symbols: the city, the desert, and the sea.

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He contends that the desert is a place that is opposite to the city, the symbol of civilization. In Eliot's poem, the city and the desert have different connotations. Eliot juxtaposes them to create a contextual and semantic similarity: that the city has become, in the world of *The Waste Land*, a desert, a dead land breeding infertility. The modern city is no more than a desert in which water becomes a powerful signifying symbol of the fertility of the land and a religious symbol that coheres notably with the religious implications of 'The Burial of the Dead' and ‘Death by Water’. Through echoes and repetitions Eliot provides different perspectives on the same theme. So he does not juxtapose elements randomly. In his note on Tiresias, Eliot writes that ‘the two sexes meet in Tiresias.’ This note suggests a pattern of connection that unifies the poem’s disparate aspects. Arguably, Eliot felt that the poem needed a unifying pattern. It is unlikely that the reader will figure out the relation between Tiresias and the poem’s voices. Tiresias reflects Eliot’s desire for order. The voices are united in Tiresias just as they are in Eliot’s mind. Eliot’s note on Tiresias then provides a key to how the poem should be read. The poem reveals that there actually exists a unifying pattern that emerges out of the juxtaposition of disparate and unrelated objects, figures, and allusions.

A third example of spatial juxtaposition in *The Waste Land* appears in ‘A Game of Chess’ where Eliot presents three scenarios. The first shows a lavishly decorated room of a wealthy lady. The second takes place in a London pub in a slum area where two women talk about Lil’s problem. The third relates to literary allusions to other women such as Ophelia, Philomel, and Cleopatra. What we see in ‘A Game of Chess’ is variations of the theme of loss, degeneration, and the failure of love in modern society. So Eliot juxtaposes spatially these stories or shots in one section of the poem. It is as if we are looking at one theme from a variety of

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angles. Eliot condenses these images at one go or in an instant of time, as if we are looking at a painting from different angles. Eliot’s technique in ‘A Game of Chess’ reveals a principle of spatial juxtaposition. Looking at the poem as a whole we can see that Eliot has discovered a critical poetic device in modern poetry that can be useful to present images and to avoid, at the same time, the limitations set by the imagistic form. Pound and the imagists experienced a problem of form in modern poetry related to how the poet can write imagist poetry with few images. The spatial juxtaposition of two images in imagist poetry (as is the case in Pound’s ‘In a Station of the Metro’) is a creative device, yet the problem is that it is limited in scope. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot presents various and numerous fragments or collocations of images to expand this form.

The problem of creating connections is one of the major concerns of Eliot’s long poem. In line 301-2 the speaker says that he ‘can connect nothing with nothing’. At this point the speaker is conscious of the poem’s fragmented form. The speaker’s failure to connect fragments together suggests an alternative device which is to collect these fragments which the speaker has shored against his ruins. The poem returns to the theme of death by water, for example, through the drowned figure in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*; there is also an allusion to Ophelia’s death by drowning in *Hamlet*; the fourth section ‘Death by Water’ presents the drowned Phoenician sailor. These recurrent images become the poem’s ‘leitmotifs’. When these images reappear in a new context, they echo suggestions and references from former contexts, thus linking images and themes contextually. The surface textual discontinuity develops through repetitions, similarities, and echoes. By using recurrent symbols and images the poem looks at the theme of death from various angles and thus exhibits the power of poetry to formulate a nexus of relations and themes out of the seemingly disconnected bits and pieces.
Through spatial juxtaposition, *The Waste Land* avoids a fixed perspective and an authorial identity. The absence of the author has affinity with Eliot's theory of impersonality which suggests the concept of 'The Death of the Author'. Barthes argues that the removal of the author 'utterly transforms the modern text' and then he defines a text as 'not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.' The rationale behind removing the author is, then, to permit the text to reveal its multi-dimensional spatiality through which meaning can be interpreted differently. Arguably, through Eliot's theory of impersonality, *The Waste Land*’s varying viewpoints could be emphasised, as Geoffrey Bullough remarks:

*The Waste Land*, with its varying viewpoints, its attempt to see the theme from several angles in the shortest possible time—to compress what might have been a long didactic or satiric poem into a few lines—might be likened to those ‘simultaneous’ analytic compositions of Braque and Picasso in which several facets of a human figure or a musical instrument are seen from various sides or opened up within, and all these are put together to form an ingenious, often very satisfying design.

This passage underlines the relation between the poem's technique and the cubist technique in painting. Bullough is referring to the spatial aspect of the poem ('to see the theme from several angles') which does not merely mean the relation between parts or fragments but also how the elements of the poem are observed from several perspectives. Bullough's comment on 'simultaneity' is significant because if fragments, scenes, and images are viewed simultaneously, they are then juxtaposed in space.


Furthermore, Eliot underscores this idea of simultaneity in his spatial conception of tradition in ‘ Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919):

[Tradition] involves...the historical sense, and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (SP, 38)

It is clear that, according to Eliot, in the mind of the poet the literature of Europe is juxtaposed spatially and forms a simultaneous existence. In order to be conscious of his place in time, the poet has to develop awareness of the literature of the past. In this sense, literary tradition is seen as ‘ the mind of Europe’, reflecting a highly allusive account of world literature. Eliot’s view of poetry as ‘a living whole’ is relevant in this context because without the past the present would be drained of its meaning and significance.

In his criticism, Eliot refers, over and over again, to the concept of spatiality in different ways. In ‘ The Metaphysical Poets’ (1921), for instance, Eliot wrote that ‘poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult....The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning’ (SP, 65). Here ‘difficulty’ is equated with allusiveness, comprehensiveness, and indirectness. So when Eliot juxtaposes spatially Baudelaire’s image of city ghosts with Dante’s crowd of hell, for instance, he is attributing this difficulty and indirectness to modern poetry. Eliot, then, establishes a new poetic method by raising images to the ‘ first intensity’ through the technique of combination and arrangement. Seeing the poem as a collage of fragments, then, contributes to the spatiality of the poem and how it works.
The Waste Land moves discontinuously in contrast to Wordsworth’s ‘Composed upon Westminster Bridge’ (1802), for example, which clearly conveys a sense of personality and communicates through an immediacy of utterance. It is written in a sonnet form and employs personification to give the city life and vitality. The description of the city in the morning intermingles with the poet’s emotional responses and feelings. Eliot would certainly object to Wordsworth’s preoccupation with the self and subjective emotions. Wordsworth’s poem derives a kind of imaginative pleasure when man and nature unite. In terms of technique, the poem is ‘monologic’, to use a Bakhtinian term, in that it expresses one voice (the author’s). It shows the poet looking at the city from a fixed point on Westminster Bridge. It is as if we are looking at a landscape painting. This view would not appeal to modern writers because it is limited in perspective. Modernist writers prefer to see an object from different perspectives in a similar way to cubism’s multiple perspectives which painters continually try to achieve in painting.

Wordsworth’s poem contrasts markedly with Eliot’s ‘Prufrock’ because the latter employs a modernist strategy of depicting personality from various angles. Prufrock imagines what others see as his inadequacies. This allows Eliot to offer a variety of viewpoints of his character. Eliot’s early poetry shows the seeds of this technique of spatial juxtaposition which he develops, on a larger scale, in The Waste Land. The expression of complex states of mind seems to dictate the form of ‘Prufrock’. There is an attempt to express a crisis of the self through discourse. Prufrock constructs himself through figures from the past: Lazarus and Hamlet. Like the character that introduces The Waste Land, the personal pronoun (‘I’) in ‘Prufrock’ dissolves into ‘we’ and ‘us’, creating a room for multiple perspectives. Prufrock cannot be seen from a narrative perspective but from a variety of fragmented viewpoints. Thus, in modernism, narrative devices are suppressed while spatial devices are given precedence. ‘Prufrock’ starts with a
juxtaposition of two images: ‘When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherised upon a table’. This method is similar to Pound’s imagistic technique of juxtaposing two images, as in ‘In a Station of the Metro’. Arguably, it is doubtful that Eliot derived this technique from Pound, given that ‘Prufrock’ was written in 1911, that is, long before he met Pound in 1914. Eliot here might be indebted to the Symbolists: Laforgue, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé.

In *The Waste Land*, spatial juxtaposition of images and Eliot’s concern with a spatial sense of literary history are prominent. In his later poetry, Eliot’s conception of poetic form in relation to poetic content has changed radically. *Four Quartets* departs from *The Waste Land*’s abrupt shift in images and voice, exhibiting a pattern that is different from what we witness in *The Waste Land*. The centrality of rural and urban scenes in *Four Quartets* and the dialectical relation between temporal and spatial axis marks a significant shift from Eliot’s early poetry.

### iii. Urban Form in Eliot’s Later Poetry

Published between 1935 and 1942, *Four Quartets* describes rural places and urban scenes from England. The poetic form of *The Waste Land* differs from that of *Four Quartets* in that the former is impersonal in the sense that it employs various voices while the latter is personal. *Four Quartets* reflects Eliot’s personal memories such as, for example, the garden in *Burnt Norton* which Eliot visited in 1935, his visit to the village of *East Coker* in 1937, his childhood years in St. Louis, and the coast near Gloucester, Massachusetts, where he spent his childhood summers. The high degree of specificity of details in *Four Quartets* led Helen Gardner to note:

[T]he moment I entered the garden of *Burnt Norton* I recognised it. I felt I had been blindfolded and dropped there by helicopter, and the bandage taken off had been asked to say where I was, I should have replied at once that I was in the garden of Eliot’s poem.
And similarly, as I walked through the streets of Gloucester every detail of *The Dry Salvages* came to life before my eyes.57

Gardner underlines the idea that Eliot’s *Four Quartets* captures the reality of the physical landscape. This actually suggests that Eliot depended heavily on these real places in writing *Four Quartets*. Gardner does not write about Eliot’s depiction of places with particularity. Rather, she stresses Eliot’s power of creating the effects of place on the visitor’s mind.

*Four Quartets* differs from *The Waste Land* in terms of landscapes. The landscapes of *Four Quartets* are both rural and urban and Eliot juxtaposes rural with urban scenes in order to contrast their symbolic meanings. It is noticeable that what is characteristically urban in *Four Quartets* is generally associated with corruption and degeneration while the rural is primarily positive in the sense that it stands for the spiritual and the divine. In *Four Quartets*, the metaphorical and symbolic urban and rural landscapes exhibit a struggle between body and soul, evil and good, God and Man. To put it differently, *Four Quartets* underlines a tension between the rural setting as a symbol of purity, fertility, and rebirth through religious and Christian themes, and the urban setting of death, degeneration, and gloom.

The city in section III of *Burnt Norton* is presented as a point of intersection of ‘here’ and ‘another world’, and this is reminiscent of the intersection of the ephemeral City of Man and the Celestial City of God in *The Waste Land*:

Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London.
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world. (*CPP*, 174)

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Here Eliot refers to specific place names in London. The lines above are reminiscent of Blake’s *Jerusalem* in terms of the contrast between the City of God and the City of Man. London, like Blake’s Jerusalem, is viewed as a transitional and intermediary place from which the movement starts towards another world. This transitional space is the limbo connecting two worlds, just like the London Bridge in *The Waste Land* which connects the underworld of underground stations with the heavenly world that Eliot seems to aspire for. It is a limbo where people are living neither ‘here’ nor in ‘another world’, neither in darkness nor in daylight. Northrop Frye traces the movement of people in ‘The Burial of the Dead’: ‘Most of the people are coming out of tube-stations, and the subway is a good image for this waste-land world because, like Dante’s scene, it is just below the surface of the ground.’ Thus, for Eliot, the Underground system might be a metaphor for Dante’s hell and that London Bridge can be associated with Dante’s limbo or purgatory.

In the previous lines the darkness of the tube station is reflected in ‘the gloomy hills of London’. The subway system conveys an urban setting that is dull, empty, and sordid. This recalls Eliot’s vision of the intersection of the two worlds suggested in the draft of *The Waste Land*: ‘Within these faint perceptions of the noise/ Of the movement, and the lights! / Not here, O Glaucon, but in another world’ (*WLFT*, 31). It is clear that Eliot associates ‘darkness’ with the earthly city and ‘light’ with the heavenly city. London is envisioned as a space that interconnects darkness with light, heaven with earth, time with the timeless. This idea is further emphasised by light and darkness in a theatre: ‘As, in a theatre, / The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed’ (*CPP*, 180). In the London Underground system ‘you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen’ (*CPP*, 180) and this emptiness makes people in the Underground like ghosts, as in Pound’s image in ‘In a Station of the Metro’. Eliot shows after the portrayal of people in the

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Underground that only faith can change darkness to light and consequently the sinful City of Man to the City of God: ‘There is yet faith/ But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting. / So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing’ (CPP, 180).

The setting in Little Gidding (1942) is London during the Blitz. In the first section the speaker describes an isolated chapel and the road that leads to it, and this suggests a journey to a better knowledge of the self through religious faith. There are clearly religious implications reflected in the reference to the chapel and the prayer. The empty chapel (in Little Gidding, Cambridgeshire) suggests that people are in a state of hell engulfed by their worldly desires. It is also a sign that bespeaks the death of spiritual belief and religious commitment:

In the uncertain hour before the morning
Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
Over the asphalt where no sound was
Between three districts whence the smoke arose
I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting. (CPP, 193)

The ‘dark dove’ combines the dove of the Holy Spirit, which came down on Christ, with the bombers attacking London during the Blitz. Thus Eliot gives the bombs a religious connotation. Associating the bombs with a religious symbol falls within the poem’s overall theme of meditation on the meaning of life and suffering. This idea can be related to Iain Sinclair’s Lud Heat in which he reflects on the bombing of London churches such as St George in the First and Second World Wars. Sinclair imagines the bombs that fell on London churches as ‘incendiary
insects'. This image suggests that the bombs that fell on London were numberless. Eliot’s image of ‘the dark dove with flickering tongue’ is stronger than Sinclair’s because it echoes an apocalyptic image from *The Book of Revelation*. The shift from a white dove to a dark metamorphic monster, in Eliot’s case, is symbolic and suggestive of religious implications.

*Little Gidding* resonates with literary allusions from Dante’s *Inferno*. Eliot’s description of the bombed city underlines his modernist perception and response to the London Blitz. This modernist perception comes from imagining London as an infernal city through the fire of the Blitz, which is used metaphorically as a symbol of destruction and as a symbol of cleansing and purification. Eliot creates a poetic and literary image out of a real event (the London Blitz 1940-1941) and makes the London Blitz landscape resonate with a literary allusion from Dante’s *Inferno*. The purpose of linking Dante’s *Inferno* to the image of the bombed city has been acknowledged by Eliot in ‘What Dante Means to Me’:

Twenty years after writing *The Waste Land*, I wrote, in *Little Gidding*, a passage which is intended to be the nearest equivalent to a canto of the Inferno or the Purgatorio, in a style as well as content, that I could achieve. The intention, of course, was the same as with my allusions to Dante in *The Waste Land*: to present to the mind of the reader a parallel, by means of contrast, between the Inferno and the Purgatorio, which Dante visited and a hallucinated scene after an air-raid. (*TCTC*, 128)

In this passage, though Eliot’s description of the London Blitz noticeably links with the literary allusions to Dante in *The Waste Land* in terms of method and content, there is actually a difference between allusions to Dante in *The Waste Land* and *Little Gidding*. In *The Waste Land* allusions to Dante are metaphorical. The fact that Eliot is writing about the London Blitz in *Little Gidding* provided him with a contextual reference to Dante’s Inferno and Purgatorio. The allusions in *Little Gidding* are more allegorical and figurative than in *The Waste Land* because

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they reveal Eliot’s attitude towards war. In Little Gidding, Eliot uses fire as a pun, that is, both as a purifying and destructive symbol: ‘To be redeemed from fire by fire’ (CPP, 196). This suggests that people are redeemed by the fire of the Blitz from the fire of desire, sin, and lust. This redemption prepares people for the heavenly City of God. Little Gidding presents Eliot’s perception of the war through establishing a link with Dante’s Inferno. Eliot gives modern London and the Blitz religious and literary connotations and this method, as in The Waste Land, establishes a link between contemporaneity and antiquity. In this sense, the London Blitz is turned into a myth because it evokes theological allusions from the past. It turns into a religious image of redemption.

This idea recalls W.B. Yeats’s ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ (1926) in which he presents the image of fire as a symbol of purification:

O sages standing in God’s holy fire
   As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
   Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
   And be the singing-masters of my soul.60

The speaker invites the wise men who stand in God’s holy fire to come and take his soul to Byzantium, an imaginary city outside time. Like Eliot, Yeats yearns for a city unaffected by the laws of time. In Yeats’s image of Byzantium, there is a contrast between the earthly infernal city and the eternal city, the utopia to which the speaker wishes to travel. Similarly, Eliot describes the fire of God’s love as the ultimate power to purge man’s sins and evil.

Fire in Little Gidding is a central image. The London Blitz is used as a symbol of purification, because by linking Dante’s Inferno with the London Blitz Eliot not only views fire as destructive but also as an active agent to purge the city from the state of sin and degradation.

This idea problematizes the view of war as ultimately destructive. That is, Eliot does not imagine
the Blitz in negative terms but as an event that purified society from the state of sin. The
following lines do not describe the London Blitz but impressively denote its effects or aftermath:

Ash on an old man’s sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air. (CPP, 192)

Eliot said that this stanza ‘came out of’ his experience in fire-watching on the roof of Faber and
Faber: ‘During the Blitz the accumulated debris was suspended in the London air for hours after
a bombing. Then it would slowly descend and cover one’s sleeves and coat with a fine white ash.
I often experienced this effect during long night hours on the roof.’61 This statement allows us to
see the poem as an embodiment of Eliot’s personal memories. *Four Quartets* marks a significant
shift in Eliot’s poetic career. There is no doubt that Eliot achieved an impersonal voice through
the wide range of voices within *The Waste Land*. *Four Quartets* departs from this notion and
formulates a different relation between the author and his poem. As Allan Marshall rightly
argues, ‘*Four Quartets* has a deliberately narrow vocal range’; ‘the poem [*Four Quartets*] is
founded quite emphatically on a rejection of *The Waste Land*’s style of aural empiricism.’62

The actual description of the falling bombs is imbued with religious overtones in section
IV of *Little Gidding*. Eliot associates the German bombers with the Pentecostal descent of the
Holy Spirit, thus creating a visual and metaphorical image. But this connection is problematic

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because we are asked to perceive the London Blitz in terms of a religious image. We are asked, that is, to see war not as an utter catastrophe but as a form of redemption or salvation. The power of the bombers is identified with the power of the Holy Spirit (such as the power to heal the sick):

The dove descending breaks the air
With flames of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire. (CPP, 196)

The fire of Christ’s love is embodied in the Holy Spirit and only this fire can purge the fire of human sin and destruction. This destruction is figuratively used in terms of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal tongues of fire that are associated with the dove, as the Spirit of God that descended on Christ at the time of his baptism.

Eliot describes the effects of the London Blitz on the city’s urban structure and this is lucid in his choice of words such as the ‘disfigured street’. In the draft of Little Gidding Eliot wrote ‘dismantled’ before ‘disfigured’. To ‘dismantle’ the street is to lay bare its structure. The word ‘dismantled’ also connotes that the streets are empty. In both words, ‘disfigured’ and ‘dismantled’, there is the idea that the Blitz has reconfigured London and its urban landscapes. Thus, Eliot’s conception of the Blitz as a remodelling of London is suggested by his choice of such words. Both words suggest the degree of change that occurs in urban space. Eliot, through these words, reveals the effect of the Blitz on London’s urban space. The word ‘dismantled’ has positive and negative meanings, positive in showing destruction in order to make things better, and negative in its sense of total destruction and sabotage. This clearly reveals Eliot’s classical ideology of war and urban ruin: that the air-raids have changed the city’s urban space, a vision
that attempts to retrieve Utopia, or reconstructs London as a Utopian spiritual city. This suggests that the Blitz cannot be imagined solely in negative terms but also as an event that produced collective social experience bringing people together in times of distress and suffering. It is not only imagined as destructive but also constructive. The London Blitz brought social, economic, and cultural changes into British society and prepared people to rebuild society and start anew.

Eliot walks through the bombscapes of London and meets his ‘compound ghost’, based on a meeting in *Inferno* XV between Dante and his master, Brunetto Latini. In the drafts of *Little Gidding*, Eliot named the ghost ‘Ser Brunetto’, a master of arts whom Dante meets in hell. The change from ‘Are you here, Ser Brunetto?’ to ‘What! Are you here?’ shows that Eliot preferred to be general. John Hayward objected to the removal of ‘Ser Brunetto’ and to this Eliot replied:

I think you will recognise that it was necessary to get rid of Brunetto for two reasons. The first is that the visionary figure has now become somewhat more definite and will no doubt be identified by some readers with Yeats though I do not mean anything so precise as that. However, I do not wish to take the responsibility of putting Yeats or anybody else into Hell and I do not want to impute to him the particular vice which took Brunetto there. Secondly, although the reference to that Canto is intended to be explicit, I wished the effect of the whole to be Purgatorial which is much more appropriate. (Quoted by Gardner, 1978, 64)

This passage clearly demonstrates the reasons behind Eliot’s modification of the phrasing. The passage clarifies that Eliot’s composed ghost is not Yeats. The idea of being haunted by ghosts in the city sounds Baudelairean. In this scene Eliot is subjected to the Baudelairean ghosts that accost him while walking the streets of the bombed city. He is, in a sense, physically haunted by Baudelaire’s ghosts in the Dantesque infernal city. Eliot here is a walker and inhabitant of London, a *flâneur* who walks the city and sees it from within. He is inside the text.

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63 Eliot identified the ghost as W.B. Yeats. The word ‘compound’ suggests that the ghost is composite. It represents not only Yeats, who is merely here the front figure of the compound, but also Eliot’s literary precursors and spectres (Coleridge, Dante, Baudelaire, among others) that haunt his poetry. Eliot once wrote ‘The sad ghost of Coleridge beckons to me from the shadows’ (*UPUC*, 156).
which he creates. Dante’s *Inferno* and the religious vision are projected onto the space of modern London. Eliot’s imagined compound ‘ghost’ recalls Wilfred Owen’s hallucinated and pitiful encounter with his enemy in ‘Strange Meeting’ (1917). Both meetings are imagined and suggest a presence in hell. The first speaker in Owen’s poem says: ‘I knew we stood in Hell’. Though ‘hell’ in Owen’s poem may refer to the battlefield of the First World War, the idea of meeting a ghost or an imaginary ‘other’ in hell links the two poems.

Eliot’s passage may be derivative of Joyce’s depiction of meeting the ghost in the sixth episode of *Ulysses* entitled ‘Hades’ where Leopold Bloom descends into the underworld of Hades. There is a striking degree of personality in this episode as Bloom recoils into his internal and subjective consciousness when he goes to attend the funeral of Paddy Dignam. Bloom’s preoccupation with the relation between him and his peers, revealed by Joyce’s technique of interior monologue, links with Eliot’s personal relation to his compound ghost. Moreover, parallel to Bloom’s journey into Dublin is Odysseus’s descent to the Kingdom of the Dead where Odysseus meets the ghost of his mother. There is a prevalent allusion to Dante’s vision because the city has become an ephemeral temporal place divested of its Christian tradition. For Eliot, the city is a place of existential purgatory, a place of temporal limbo where people remain indecisive in their sense of direction: ‘And each man fixed his eyes before his feet’ (*CPP*, 62). Human individual isolation is a result of being unmoved by what lies above or below their vision of sight. Sites of a Christian past are obscured by the daily material routine of city working life.

Furthermore, the idea of meeting a ghost in hell is also anticipated by Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, one of the modernist texts that inspired Eliot. Marlow’s journey to the Congo can be conceived as a journey into the depth of the *Inferno* where Marlow meets Kurtz. From the beginning of the novelette Kurtz is envisioned by Marlow as a ghost and the landscapes of the
African Jungle as hell. This is revealed by Conrad's representation of the Congo in terms of circles: Outer, Middle, and Inner Stations. The idea of the Congo as hell is further echoed by Marlow's words: ‘My purpose was to stroll into the shade for a moment; but no sooner within than it seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno.’ Though Conrad depicts the jungle, rather than the city, as a kind of hell, the apparent juxtaposition between the African hell-like jungle and the civilized world of London allows us to interpret the latter in terms of the former. And it is this juxtaposition that probably inspired Eliot initially to borrow lines from Conrad's text as an epigraph to *The Waste Land*. In a sense, Eliot, Joyce, and Conrad borrow from Dante the image of the inferno as a symbol that may describe the reality of urban living in the twentieth-century city.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have argued that Eliot has been preoccupied with finding new ways of representing the city and that Eliot’s major poetic achievement in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* is how they constitute responses to the moral, spiritual, cultural, and artistic problems which the modern city creates. Throughout his poetic career, Eliot was always a poet of the city seeking ways to define its impact on modern consciousness. His unpublished poems reveal a great deal about his urban sensibility. They exhibit Eliot’s concerns with creating a new urban form adequate to his urban experience. The second part of the chapter develops Joseph Frank’s concept of ‘spatial form’ in modern poetry. I have tried to reveal how this concept helps us understand Eliot’s structural poetics and its relation to his urban vision in *The Waste Land*. In the third section I have considered Eliot’s later poetry, mainly *Four Quartets*, and sought to shed light on the significance of the underground and the Blitz in the general picture of Eliot’s treatment of the city. The observations made in this chapter together suggest the centrality of the urban theme in Eliot’s poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

Non-Metropolitan Perspectives:
The City in William Carlos Williams and Roy Fisher

i. William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson*

There is a consensus among critics and poets alike that literary modernism reached its zenith with the publication of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in 1922. Such works continued to influence the English literary culture till the Second World War. Eliot developed his modernist style from the French Symbolists, Charles Baudelaire, Jules Laforgue, and Stéphane Mallarmé, combining French symbolism with images of the modern city. Eliot’s modernism was largely seen in his revival of a literary tradition, his emphasis on the historical discontinuity between past and present, and the innovative poetic impersonality in response to the subjective egoism of the romantics. Eliot’s modernism is also manifest in his representation of the city as a cosmopolitan structure. William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson* questions the founding principles of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound upon which modernist critical notions were based. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* emerged as a major force behind *Paterson’s* formulation of a new poetic. Contesting the literary modernism of Eliot, Williams’s *Paterson* reveals poetic modernism as an uncompleted project. *Paterson* not only redefines the nature of modern poetry and poetic language but also represents the modern city in a different way from Eliot. How Williams’s *Paterson* responds to Eliot’s representation of modern London in *The Waste Land* is a point that has not been given its due critical attention. My aim in this chapter is twofold. First,
juxtaposing Williams's *Paterson* with Eliot's *The Waste Land*, I argue that although *Paterson* represents the modern city from a perspective different from that of *The Waste Land*, Williams's representation of Paterson is problematic. The problem in *Paterson* results from Williams's modification of the relation between the city and poetic form that gave a new shape to the material he provides. Second, I will highlight how Williams's poem has changed the path of post-war British poetry of the city, taking as an example Roy Fisher's *City* (1961) and *A Furnace* (1986), which, as the second part of this chapter will illustrate, create a new poetry of the city by blending elements of Eliot's and Williams's urban poetry.

After the publication of *The Waste Land* (1922), Williams aired scathing comments about the poem's growing influence:

> Then out of the blue *The Dial* brought out *The Waste Land* and all our hilarity ended. It wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it....Critically Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form—rooted in the locality which should give it fruit. I knew at once that in certain ways I was most defeated (*Auto*, 174).

This criticism of *The Waste Land* is fuelled by Williams's belief that modern poetry should revive the local in 'a new art form'. Arguably, this new artistic form is put into practice in *Paterson*, a poem that chronicles the life and history of Paterson, an industrial city near Rutherford in New Jersey. *Paterson* is a long poem in five books, the first of which appeared in 1946 and the other four in 1948, 1949, 1951, and 1958. Williams's response to Eliot's erudition in *The Waste Land* is manifest in conceiving *Paterson* as 'a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands' (*P*, 2). Williams's indignation at Eliot's revival of, and affiliation to, a European literary tradition led him to free poetry from the tyranny of tradition: 'My models, Shakespeare, Milton, dated back to a time when men thought in orderly fashion. I felt that
modem life had gone beyond that; our poems could not be contained in the strict orderliness of
the classics." This statement reveals Williams's emphasis on a new poetic, unlike Eliot who
regarded literary texts as models through which the poet may find his voice and thus create the
new. Though both Eliot and Williams are concerned with history, Eliot considered the
European literary tradition as inseparable from the poetic experience and the poet’s conception
of his place in time. Williams revives the cultural history of the city from the perspective of the
local.

*Paterson*, however, is not only an answer to *The Waste Land*’s use of literary tradition
but also to Eliot’s representation of the city. While Eliot views the city as inseparable from the
European tradition, Williams is concerned with Paterson as a locality, defined by, and
inseparable from, the specificity of its local culture, its history, and its social and economic
forces. The two poems differ in their depictions of urban life. In *The Waste Land*, man is
constantly haunted by a myriad of visual impressions which the modern metropolis generates.
Williams does not present this urban experience in *Paterson* and veers instead to chronicling
the history of the city, the Passaic Falls and the Ramapos, the original settlers of Paterson. The
historical excerpts included in *Paterson* define the nature of the city and its development in
time. In Williams’s city, thus, the individual does not experience the rapid and fleeting
impressions of the metropolis but a sense of his place in time.

Though Williams was inspired by the spatial and mythical form of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, he
reverts to representing the city through history and locality. In Book I of *Paterson*, ‘The
Delineaments of the Giants’, Williams imagines Paterson (the city and the man) as a mythic
giant:

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Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic Falls
its spent waters forming the outline of his back. He
lies on his right side, head near the thunder
of the waters filling his dreams! Eternally asleep,
his dreams walk about the city where he persists
incognito. (P, 6)

This image reveals the influence of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in terms of mythologizing the city. In *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, Williams told Edith Heal that ‘[he] may have been influenced by James Joyce who had made Dublin the hero of his book. I had been reading *Ulysses*. But I forgot about Joyce and fell in love with my city’ (*IWWP*, 82). Inspired by the way Joyce represents the city as a mythic giant, Williams follows Joyce in universalizing the local. Joyce once remarked: ‘For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal.’ In a letter to Horace Gregory, Williams reveals that it is precisely the local culture that is missing in Eliot’s work: ‘He [Eliot] has steadfastly ignored the application of the principles which he affects now to discover, the essential nature of local culture while spouting at length upon its necessity…there is no universal except in the local’ (SL, 224). This quotation reveals that Williams’s theory of localism stems from his opposition to Eliot’s revival of the cosmopolitan in his poetry.

In the author’s note which is appended to *Paterson*, Williams stated that he preferred Paterson to other cities (such as New York) because of its locality and its rich colonial history:

The problem of the poetics I knew depended upon finding a specific city, one that I knew, so I searched for a city. New York? It couldn’t be New York, not anything as big as a metropolis. Rutherford wasn’t a city. Passaic wouldn’t do. I’d known about Paterson even written about it as I’ve mentioned. Suddenly it dawned on me I had a find. I began my investigations. Paterson had a history, an important colonial history. It had, bedsides, a river- the Passaic, and the Falls. (*IWWP*, 83)

This passage indicates that Williams discarded New York City because of its size and because he was not adequately familiar with its details. In another statement about New York, Williams said that ‘New York City belongs to the world, and I did not feel that I could properly handle it, in a small compass, giving it all the characteristics that I knew.’67 Implied in this is the idea that New York did not appeal to Williams because it is not local (i.e. regional) or close to him. Unlike New York, Paterson, for Williams, was unique and different from any other city he knew. Williams’s attitude towards the people of Paterson reveals a close sense of community typical of that in a small town or the countryside: ‘I wanted...to write about the people close about me: to know in detail, minutely what I was talking about—to the whites of their eyes, to their very smells’ (Author’s Note). Williams’s intention to write about the people and the place he knows contrasts with Eliot’s vision of London as an ‘unreal city’ where the metropolis instils in the inhabitant an ineffable feeling of disorientation.

Writing about Paterson and its local culture suggests Williams’s conception of Paterson as a provincial city. In a letter to Marianne Moore, Williams says that the girl at the opening of Paterson IV ‘represents the ‘great world’ against the more or less primitive world of the provincial city’ (my italics) (SL, 304). By ‘provincial city’ Williams means, of course, Paterson but the word ‘provincial’ (which refers to the local or the regional) identifies Paterson as a small city. In I Wanted to Write a Poem, Williams told Edith Heal: ‘I was always a country boy, felt myself a country boy. To me the countryside was a real world but nonetheless a poetic world’ (IWWP, 33). This statement brings Williams close to the nineteenth-century romantic position—seeing the city as unpoetic or, indeed, anti-poetic. Williams’s form of poetic modernism is

manifest in reviving the relation between poetry and the local. He transcends modernism’s emphasis on the metropolitan by writing about the local and insists that the local can still inspire the modern poet. Williams’s position here, furthermore, exemplifies the stance taken by early twentieth century Georgian poets whose poetry, as some critics argued, concentrates on the revival of rural themes.68

_Paterson_ asserts this by relocating the centre of modernism thus limiting its scope to the peripheral city. For Williams poetic modernism should not only be confined to the metropolis or large urban conurbations. While Eliot stresses the image of the crowd in the metropolis, an infernal place where people are more or less dead, Williams centres his poem on the individual, on the survival of man in the city, and on the harmonious relation between the two. His _Paterson_ re-imagines the city by identifying man with the city: ‘a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody—if imaginatively conceived—any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions’ (Author’s Note). This statement embodies the plan of the whole poem; it underlines Williams’s imagining of the city through the analogy between man and the various aspects which a city may embody. This man-as-city trope is used because Williams wanted, as he stated, ‘to find an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world about me’ (Author’s Note). _Paterson_, in this sense, can be conceived as an autobiographical poem where Williams seems to rethink Eliot’s notion of poetic impersonality. William Sharpe convincingly argues that the identification of man with a city is problematic because ‘Williams wants to dissolve self, city, and text into one another. His all-encompassing concept of “the city/the man, an identity” (_P_, 3) erodes the boundaries between self and Other, place and poet, upon

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68 In his book _British Poetry in the Age of Modernism_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Peter Howarth uses the term ‘non-modernist’ to describe Georgian poets and explores how their poetry responded to the modernist revolution.
which the *topos* depends* (Sharpe, 142). Williams stated that: ‘When I speak of Paterson throughout the poem, I speak of both the man and the city’ (*IWWP*, 83), and this indicates that he brings the two in juxtaposition where one might inform the other. Perhaps this is his initial attempt when he brings man and city together, but he also questions the boundaries between the two when he acknowledges the changing reality of the city. It is notable that Williams is inconsistent in his use of the man-city image, presented as ‘a man is like a city’ and sometimes ‘a man in himself is a city’. The former suggests a similarity between the two, while the latter erodes the boundaries between the two through personification. At the beginning of *Paterson*, Williams objectifies man’s inner life by internalising the outside world.

Eliot’s notion of poetic impersonality and his concept of tradition as ‘the mind of Europe’, as he states in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919), contrasts with Williams’s revival of the city through the poetic mind. Eliot’s impersonality allows us to see London in *The Waste Land* as a universal space, aligned with, and defined by, various civilization centres. Williams, on the other hand, has thought seriously about the relation between mind and city as a plan for *Paterson*:

I began thinking of writing a long poem upon the resemblance between the mind of modern man and a city. The thing was to use the multiple facets which a city presented as representative for comparable facets of contemporary thought, thus to be able to objectify the man himself as we know him and love him and hate him.\(^{69}\)

Williams sees the relation between mind and city in metaphorical terms. While Eliot stresses that the mind of modern man is defined through his allegiance to tradition, to a truth outside himself, Williams subjectifies the city through the mind. This idea in Williams is contradictory: how are we to see this relation between the mind of man (the mind of Dr. Paterson the

protagonist who reflects Williams himself) and the city through objective terms, as Williams suggests in the passage quoted above? The idea of identifying man with the city is indeed inspiring, but there is a problematic relation between Williams's continual insistence on objectifying as well as subjectifying the city.

Williams's inability to objectify the city leads him to create the city of the mind. Identifying man with the city anticipates the new urbanism of the Situationist International which emphasised the concept of the city of the mind by recording the varied ambiences in cityscapes. Describing Paterson's thoughts, Williams states: 'Inside the bus one sees/ his thoughts sitting and standing' (P, 9). Like the Situationists, Williams sees the city as a psychological reality. The Situationist International introduced a new theory of urbanism formulated by Ivan Chtcheglov in his essay 'Formulary for a New Urbanism' (1953). In it Chtcheglov claimed that a new city and a new urban life must be created: 'We are bored in the city, we really have to strain to still discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the latest state of humor and poetry.' This new form of urbanism, which the Situationists termed 'unitary urbanism' and which was achieved through practising the dérive or drift, delineates a new awareness of the poet's role in modern society. The concept of the drift means walking aimlessly through the city's streets in the attempt to break the rules of routine walking and thus experience the city in a radical new way. The second book of Paterson presents Paterson and the urban crowd wandering aimlessly in the park. Williams's conception of the city as representative of the thoughts of modern man suggests a form of psychogeography because through Paterson's imagination we see how the city influences his mind and moods. Recording

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the ambiences of the city through aimless wandering can be contrasted with *The Waste Land*’s vision of the crowd walking to their offices with their eyes fixed on their feet.

Williams and Eliot differ in their representations of the social system. Eliot sheds light on the social life of the metropolis, drawing on both the working class and the upper-class. The inhabitants of *The Waste Land* are de-humanised: the commercial businessman, Mr Eugenides, is represented as ‘the one-eyed merchant’, ‘unshaven’, ‘with a pocket full of currants’. In ‘A Game of Chess’, particularly in the pub scene, the working-class people are ridiculed through their odd London accent and trivial activities. Their indifference to the bartender’s call reflects their slum existence. Eliot mockingly displays the problem of communication and the sterile sexual relationship in the life of the low-class people such as Lil and Albert. The forces of urban living are strongly felt in the sordid conditions of the working class and their inability to communicate effectively. Eliot, moreover, reveals the inane and callous chattering life of the working classes by juxtaposing the pub scene with the image of an upper-class wealthy woman in a room furnished with paintings, a fireplace, and a gilded chair. Thus Eliot’s disparaging of the working class suggests a biased representation of the social system.

*Paterson* challenges modernism’s incomplete view of urban, social life in the metropolis evident in *The Waste Land*’s sordid and banal vision of urban existence where the inhabitants are completely estranged from the city. London is an ‘unreal city’ because it is phantasmagoric, continually shifting and disorienting. Williams stated that his objective in *Paterson* is to use all the details of the city in order to voice man’s most intimate convictions (Author’s Note). In this sense, *Paterson* departs from *The Waste Land*’s degraded vision of the city as an alienating place. Williams’s *Paterson*, by way of contrast, presents a democratic, egalitarian view of the working class as an essential part of urban life. So much space in
Paterson is devoted to revealing the quotidian life of the social working class that operates as an active, productive force in society. This attitude to the working class is typical of Williams. In ‘The Forgotten City’ (1944), for instance, Williams commemorates the poor and reveals a tension between metropolitan and city life:

I would some day go back to study this curious and industrious people who lived in these apartments, at these sharp corners and turns of intersecting avenues with an outside world. How did they get cut off this way from representation in our newspapers and other means of publicity when so near the metropolis, so closely surrounded by the familiar and the famous? (CP II, 86)

The rhetorical question at the end stresses the tension between life in the metropolis and life in other urban centres. The lines underscore Williams’s sympathy for the working class people. He not only laments their condition because they are overlooked by the various types of media but also feels that the metropolis is threatening their world. The poem suggests that the depiction of the social system in the metropolis is incomplete without the working class. This egalitarian, Marxist stance is evident in another poem entitled ‘Pastoral’ (1917), in which Williams presents the speaker walking through the streets ‘admiring the houses/ of the very poor’ (CP I, 64). By way of contrast, in ‘Morning at the Window’ (1917), Eliot presents the low-class people but only to reveal that their imprisoned lives create the symbolic emptiness of modern man. The image of ‘the rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens’ underlines the routine life of slum existence. The speaker looks at the people in the streets from an upper window but the view instils in him a dreary and sordid feeling of modern life. The observer is not sympathetic to the low-class people because they only remind him of the futility of his
existence. Eliot is fascinated by the image of someone observing others through a window or being observed by others in the streets as in ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ in which Prufrock imagines how other people see him.

In the second book of *Paterson*, ‘Sunday in the Park’ (1948), Paterson spends an ordinary Sunday in a park at the Garret Mountain where he observes the working-class people during their usual activities. In ‘Sunday in the Park’, Williams’s interest in visual art is distinctive. He appears to be transposing the visual into the verbal, as if he uses words to describe a painting. Williams’s ‘Sunday in the Park’ recalls a painting by the French Parisian Georges-Pierre Seurat, who belongs to the neo-impressionist school. The painting is entitled ‘Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte’, which is one of the most distinctive paintings of nineteenth century art. This painting presents people during their Sunday activities in a rural island overlooking the Seine in Paris. Williams possibly saw this painting, which was exhibited in the Art Institute of Chicago. In ‘Sunday in the Park’, Williams describes what the protagonist (Paterson) sees during his walk: Indians, a chipmunk, a man sitting combing the hair of a Collie, people eating, drinking, guitar-playing, dancing, and listening to a sermon by a Protestant Evangelist. Paterson here is a walker. He is a *flâneur* who takes part in the activities that take place in the park. During his walk, Paterson reflects on the movement of the crowd: ‘their feet aimlessly wandering’ (P, 55). Again, this view contrasts markedly with Eliot’s lifeless and inert London workers walking the circuit of an infernal metropolis where ‘each man fixed his eyes before his feet’ (CPP, 62).

Williams’s *Paterson* does not only differ from *The Waste Land* in its outlook on the social working class but also in reviving the history and geography of the city. While space configures Eliot’s conception of London in *The Waste Land*, time plays a significant role in
Williams’s representation of Paterson. This is not to claim that time is insignificant in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* or that space does not prefigure much in Williams’s *Paterson*, but that the two writers vary in their conceptions of the relation between time and space. In *Paterson*, Williams’s organisation of the historical elements suggests a temporal more than a spatial dimension. This is because of the abundance of the details he brings forth and also because of the nature of these details which concern the historical and cultural life of the city. Williams presents excerpts of letters, poetry, prose, stories, and newspaper clippings. According to Weimer, in *Paterson* we witness two cities, one past and the other present and one prosaic and the other poetic.71 Williams creates a *palimpsest* where we read two cities, and this suggests a conception of the city in terms of time. In a way that contrasts with Eliot’s spatial conception of literary tradition, Williams revitalizes our interest in the history of Paterson through his suggestion of the significance of the historical past of the city in shaping our sense of the local. This idea stands behind Williams’s choice to write about Paterson specifically:

Paterson has a definite history associated with the beginnings of the United States. It has besides a central feature, the Passaic Falls which as I began to think about it became more and more the lucky burden of what I wanted to say. I began to read all I could about the history of the Falls, the park on the little hill beyond it and the early inhabitants (*P*, xiii-xiv).

This passage exhibits Williams’s conception of Paterson as a synecdoche for the United States and that what attracts Williams to Paterson is the rich history of its geographical features. So there is a link between Williams’s sense of history and the geography of the city. Williams’s desire to discover the city through his search into the history of the Passaic Falls brings him to articulate its most salient feature, which is water power as essential to the city’s economic development.

Williams's conception of *Paterson* as a city poem where time plays a significant role is evident in a letter to Henry Wells: 'I conceived the whole of *Paterson* at one stroke and wrote it down—as it appears at the beginning of the poem. All I had to do after that was to fill in the details as I went along, from day to day' (*SL*, 333). Joseph Riddle convincingly argues that this statement suggests the original conception of *Paterson* as a poem of time.\(^7\) Conceiving the poem 'at one stroke' is an instantaneous act that involves time. This conception suggests Pound's definition of the image in a moment in time. Williams's statement about conceiving *Paterson* at one stroke suggests a tendency to spatialize time but Williams's revival of the city from a historical perspective brings in another conception of time (duration). That is, Williams sought to present a spatial conception of the poem's details but, arguably, the abundance of these details which Williams collects throughout the years of writing the poem brings in another sense of time. So we have here two different aspects of time: moment and duration. As a result, the question of creating a spatial form through which Williams can juxtapose the poem's elements is problematic because the poem's various details were bound to accumulate throughout the years leading Williams to rethink his strategy of organising these elements.

Yet, though Williams was interested in the history of Paterson, he did not present the poem's details chronologically. In Book One, for example, Williams gathers different events which do not follow sequentially. Williams's method is more of a *palimpsest* than a *collage*, given the poem's wide scope of reference and the use of time as duration. The latter is a spatial image, while the former suggests overlaying through time. Diachronically structured, *Paterson* progresses like a stream of consciousness. Williams draws on the method of interweaving elements when he states that the poet 'gathers all the threads together that have spun for many

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centuries before him and woven them into his design' (SE, 103). If the poet’s task is to weave all
the threads of his poetic images, the poem then can be conceived as a kind of tapestry, as a text
weaved and governed by time (duration). This idea contrasts with Eliot’s spatial form (the
juxtaposition of various poetic images that inform each other) which I discussed in the previous
chapter. Eliot juxtaposes the present with the past, time with the timeless world of myth (and this
enables him to create a poetics of space through which the poem develops spatially and moves
from one image to another). Eliot’s method appears also in ‘Prufrock’, for instance, where he
spatialises time by juxtaposing Prufrock with Hamlet, and in The Waste Land by juxtaposing
Baudelaire’s and Dante’s crowds with the crowd in modern London.

By contrast, Williams temporalises space by imagining the city as a historical palimpsest,
encompassing a large amount of historical details as a result of his revival of the local culture. As
Hoover points out, the awareness of the city in relation to its history is one of the consequences
of the Second World War:

The years following World War II have been characterized by an increased interest in
urban themes....Historians share in the increased awareness of the city; in the years since
1945 the number of urban histories has increased and the number of historians
specializing in urban history has grown commensurately.\footnote{Dwight W. Hoover, ‘The Diverging Paths of American Urban History’, American Quarterly, vol. 20, no. 2 (Summer 1968), 296.}

This increased interest in the historical dimension of the city came as a result of the war’s
destructive power which led urban planners and urban historians alike to re-examine urban space
from a historical perspective. The idea that urban space is perceived as a historical product
suggests that any change in the physical structure of the city will be accounted for in terms of the
historical development of space. This leads us to think of the city not only as a spatial construct
but also as a historical one affecting human memory. As a post-war poem, Paterson refers to the
significance of this historical aspect and the need to revive the city in the mind of its inhabitants. Williams gathers the historical resources of *Paterson* in order to revive the city's lost details. The purpose of re-writing the history of the city is a response to the historical and cultural forces of the modern city. Williams's statement that 'Divorce is the sign of knowledge in our time' (*P*, 18) can be read as a response to the moral, social, and cultural problems which the modern city engenders. Patersonians are divorced from the place they inhabit because they lack a sense of place which can be revitalised by realising the significance of the history of the place. At the beginning of *Paterson*, Williams writes that the city alienates the individual and that people 'walk outside their bodies aimlessly' (*P*, 6). According to Quinn, the historical excerpts included in *Paterson* 'can best be understood as a study in sources, an ignorance of which is one of the main causes why citizens of Paterson walk around asleep, desires locked in their minds, inarticulate.' 74 Patersonians thus need to rediscover their local city in order to be socially integrated and in harmony with the city.

Moreover, the historical materials of the city significantly contribute to the open-ended form of the poem. Paul Mariani, Williams's biographer, provides another reason for the incorporation of the historical materials in *Paterson*, suggesting that Williams needed them in order to broaden the scope of his poem and because poetry was not enough for the modern epic. 75 The question that poses itself here is: why is poetry not enough for the poem? Williams was probably unable to give the reader a sense of historical time through poetry only. Mariani's note points to the relation between poetic form and content. According to Riddle, '[the] local detail demands a metonymic and hence diachronic view of that detail' (Riddle, 176). Arguably, the development of the historical details of Paterson over time necessitated a reconstruction of

poetic form. Initially, Williams thought that he could only collect and arrange such historical materials. In a letter to Horace Gregory, Williams mentioned that he was having problems in continuing *Paterson*: ‘I thought all I had to do was to arrange the material but that’s ridiculous. Much that I have collected is antique now. The old approach is outdated, and I shall have to work like a fiend to make myself new again’ (*SL*, 234). The question of ‘making myself new’ echoes Eliot and Pound, particularly Pound’s dictum: ‘Make it New’. Williams’s statement suggests that he was concerned with updating the details that he collected, and that the changing reality of Paterson should be kept in correspondence with its changing history. Given the diachronic nature of its local detail, *Paterson* must always record the new. Thus the interest in the history of Paterson corresponds with Williams’s realisation of the protean nature of the city, that Paterson is always changing, bringing new material to hand: ‘a city in itself, that complex atom, always breaking down’ (*P*, 178). This quote serves to underline Williams’s problem of conceptualising the city. *Paterson*, as Williams came to realise, fails to bring man and city together. Williams realised that man and city are different and cannot be brought into harmony: ‘I have come to understand not only that many changes have occurred in me and the world, but I have been forced to recognize that there can be no end to such a story I have envisioned with the terms which I have laid down for myself’ (*P*, xv).

This statement suggests that Williams is caught between theory and practice. He begins his poem with the theme that a man in himself is a city, but the idea that the city is continually changing suggests that the city cannot be governed by the human mind and this realisation disengages the poem’s initial hypothesis from its conclusion. Williams is confronted with the problem of revealing the locality of the city and the need for reconsidering the city’s protean

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nature. In light of this argument, the problem which Williams faced in writing *Paterson* is how to create a city poem that will always correspond to the changing life of the city. Thus, putting an end to his story—as he did when he decided that the poem should be in four books recounting the development of man and city—is at odds with his purpose of finding an image large enough to embody the world he knew.\(^7\) Writing a fifth book of *Paterson*, and a sixth one which was found in manuscripts, widens the poem’s scope which leads eventually to envisioning the poem as an encyclopaedia incorporating a variety of details and events. This problem of representation led Williams to revise *Paterson*’s formal structure which resulted in transcending the boundaries between material and mental space, or between the physical actual city and the city of the mind.

The relation between the poem and its historical form links interestingly with Lloyd’s image of *Paterson* as a newspaper.\(^7\) This conception brings again the way the poem works in terms of time and space. Lloyd argues that Williams must have read John Dewey’s comment in *The Dial*:

> The newspaper is the only genuinely popular form of literature we have achieved. The newspaper hasn’t been ashamed of localism. It has revelled in it, perhaps wallowed is the word. I am not arguing that it is highclass literature, or for the most part good literature, even from its own standpoint. But it is permanently successful romance and drama, and that much can hardly be said for anything else in our literary lines. (Quoted by Lloyd, 197)

This passage recalls an interesting idea presented by F.T. Marinetti in his Futurist Manifesto that the newspaper is a ‘synthesis of a day in the world’s life’.\(^7\) The idea of the newspaper as a duration, which applies also to Joyce’s *Ulysses*, contrasts with Williams’s imagistic technique in

\(^7\) William Sharpe notes the poem’s instability, arguing that the city/poem fails to govern the energy it radiates. See Sharpe’s seminal essay “That Complex Atom”: The City and Form in William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson*, *Poesis*, 6.2 (1985), 85.


Paterson. Though a newspaper arranges news spatially, the type of news it brings is governed by time. Here again we have two different ways of conceiving time. The image of Paterson as newspaper supports the argument that Williams’s conception of the city is governed by a temporalising technique. Imagined as a newspaper, Paterson will always incorporate the new through the development of time. A good example of this is the story of David Hower in Paterson:

In February 1857, David Hower, a poor shoemaker with a large family, out of work and money, collected a lot of mussels from Notch Brook near the City of Paterson. He found in eating them many hard substances. At first he threw them away but at last submitted some of them to a jeweler who gave him twenty-five to thirty dollars for the lot (P, 9).

This historical incident reveals the significance of Paterson in terms of the local. It reflects the culture of Patersonians who need to appreciate the importance of Paterson. Williams seems to suggest by this incident that Paterson is a rich locale. Most of the historical prose in Book One has the purpose of magnifying the city such as, for instance, Williams’s account of the story of catching the twaalft, a huge freshwater fish, on August 31, 1817, near the Falls basin. Before the end of Book One, Williams inserts the story of Patersonians carrying ‘millions of fish’ and eels in wagons (P, 34). This is followed by the story of finding a human body at the Falls in August 16, 1875 and ‘the news attracted a very large number of visitors all that day’ (P, 35) (my italics). These stories suggest Paterson as a newspaper in terms of form and content. Just as newspapers encompass a variety of news items, Paterson combines short excerpts that reveal the cultural history of the city which is represented as a repository of news. Williams represents the city as a newspaper in order to draw attention to the city itself that has probably been under-represented by the media. By representing the city as a newspaper, Williams discovered a new way of articulating urban form.
By re-imagining the city from a historical perspective and by reconfiguring the relation between temporal and spatial paradigms, Williams creates a new vision of the city. This vision is inseparable from Williams’s sense of poetic form. Through his representation of the city, Williams redefines the poetic modernism of the early twentieth century which concentrates on large conurbation areas or the metropolis as a definitive locale of poetic and artistic imagination. This redefinition reveals Williams’s conception of poetic modernism as an incomplete project by drawing the reader’s attention to his locale, Paterson, a city that lies on the periphery yet central in various ways to his poetic sensibility and imagination. This representation reinvestigates the relation between the city and poetic form with which Williams was preoccupied throughout the years of writing his epic. *Paterson* not only revisits Eliot’s urban vision that centres on the metropolis but also seeks to present a new conception of the city.

**ii. Roy Fisher’s *City* and *A Furnace***

Williams’s form of poetic modernism and his treatment of the city in *Paterson* have inspired the poetry of Roy Fisher. Born in 1930, Fisher grew up in Birmingham whose landscapes form a persisting presence in his poetry. One of the problems that face critics in their study of Roy Fisher is categorisation. This problem has resulted from Fisher’s indecisive and indeterminate answers to the questions that concern his early influences. Most of the questions addressed to Fisher in interviews tend to associate him with a particular –ism. Different critics have described him as a modernist, a post-modernist, and a non-modernist. What complicates this process of pigeon-holing more is Fisher’s description of himself as a ‘1905 Russian Modernist’ and a ‘1920s Russian Modernist’ and sometimes as a ‘Romantic poet’.\(^8^0\) Such labels

draw attention to the fact that Fisher’s work resists classification. This kind of resistance endows his work with an air of mystery, and explains, in turn, why critics have adopted various critical approaches in their study of Fisher. As Peter Barry has pointed out, those who write about Fisher take either the ‘Davie’ view, which stresses his affinities with the ‘mainstream’, or the ‘Mottram’ view, which is ‘separatist’, focusing on Fisher’s differences from the ‘mainstream’ and emphasising his relation to American poetics. There is a third group, according to Barry, that stresses both American and European sides. In fact, the approach taken by the third group is quite rational because Fisher’s poetry actually exhibits characteristics of both American and European modernisms. In other words, the difficulty in interpreting and classifying Fisher arises from the fact that his poetry, particularly *City* (1961) and *A Furnace* (1986), demonstrates a tension between regionalism and cosmopolitanism, or between provincialism/localism and internationalism. Though Fisher writes about Birmingham as an industrial local city (i.e. as a small regional area), representative of post-war modern urbanisation, he tends to place Birmingham in a wider context, as is the case when he compares Birmingham with London towards the end of *City*.

In this section of the chapter, I will explore Fisher’s representation of the city in *City* (1961) and *A Furnace* (1986) and reveal how his poetry creates a new sense of the city by blending the aesthetic of Williams’s *Paterson* with the early modernist techniques of representation. In *City* and *A Furnace*, Fisher attempts to articulate a new urban awareness. The two poems modify Williams’s idea of the local through the deployment of temporal and spatial forces that constitute the poetic vision of the modern city. Examining the techniques of spectrality and defamiliarization, I will explore how Fisher’s *City* diverges from Williams’s

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conception of the city as an expression of man’s intimate convictions. I will also explore how *A Furnace* adjusts Williams’s notion of the spiral and the conception of the poem as an energy field.

Published in 1961, *City* is Fisher’s best known work. It revolves around Birmingham and the urban, industrial culture of the post-war period. The poem is divided into eleven sections that combine prose and poetry in a manner reminiscent of Williams’s *Paterson*. Neil Corcoran observes that ‘one of the signs of Roy Fisher’s neo-modernity is his deft combination of verse and prose forms in some of his poetry.’\(^{82}\) Much of the vitality of the poem derives from Fisher’s desire to reveal the city through images of urban, industrial culture. *City* is replete with urban images that manifest the city as a locale always in a state of flux. Emphasising how the city was and is now, Fisher begins his poem with the following sentence: ‘On one of the steep slopes that rise towards the centre of the city all the buildings have been destroyed within the past year: a whole district of the tall narrow houses that spilled around what were a hundred years ago outlying factories has gone’.\(^{83}\) Fisher indicates that the process of urban renewal has created a new sense of the city. Implicit in Fisher’s statement is that historical layering is inseparable from the changing spatiality of the city. Fisher attempts to uncover the city of the past. He imagines the city as a palimpsest where ‘the ghost of the older one still lies among the spokes of the new’ (*LS*, 32). Fisher reads in the modern city its past by examining its underlying layers and contrasting the city ‘in the century that has passed’, ‘sixty or seventy years ago’ with the city in the present. In ‘By the Pond’, the fifth section of *City*, the narrator states:

> Compared with these structures the straight white blocks and concrete roadways of today are a fairground, a clear dream just before waking, the creation of salesmen rather than

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engineers. The new city is bred out of a hard will, but as it appears, it shows itself a little ingratiating, a place of arcades, passages, easy ascents, good light. (LS, 36)

Fisher is critical of the city’s new development. The observer suggests a contradiction between the real and the ideal, the produced and the consumed, or the industrial city of factories and the consumed city of entertainment and shops. Fisher juxtaposes the city of work and engineers with the city of salesmen, the city that is bombed and the city that is reconstructed. The consumed city expresses a desire to ingratiate itself, to render itself agreeable. It presents itself as something pleasurable. The new city is governed by a luminous light that is not transcendental but the constructed sublimity of a post-industrial dream which blinds the viewer with its desire to control the human gaze rather than a place of labour. This ironically echoes Blake’s dark satanic mills of the industrial city and its ‘mind-forged manacles’. This, the new city, the observer feels, is unreal, distorting our sense of reality and human memory. Fisher then presents the city as an epitome of cultural and social contradictions between how it was and how it is now. This complex representation of the city as a multi-layered historical phenomenon has resulted from the urban changes that occurred in Birmingham after the Second World War. The houses that were damaged during the war were reconstructed and new flats were built over the wreckage of the old buildings.

In ‘By the Pond’ Fisher likens the streets to ‘webbed membranes’ (LS, 35), a metaphor that suggests the problem of city planning. In this section of the poem Fisher maps the city and its landmarks: ‘cottage railway stations’, ‘a jail that pretended to be a castle’, ‘public urinals’, ‘the workhouses’, ‘older hospitals’, ‘thick-walled abattoir’, ‘long vaulted market-halls’, and ‘striding canal bridges and railway viaducts’ (LS, 35). Here the city is perceived as a matrix of unrelated signs. Fisher is conscious of the city’s industrial growth which occurred between the
mid-nineteenth century and the 1960s. Comparing ‘an arrogant ponderous architecture that dwarfed and terrified the people by its sheer size and functional brutality’ with the new city’s ‘straight white blocks and concrete roadways of today’, Fisher presents a critique of the city’s social and urban structure. His description of ‘an arrogant ponderous architecture’ implies a critique of the Victorian mentality which this architecture embodies. The last prose passage in ‘By the Pond’ suggests a reading of the city through its past by unearthing the layers that underlie the present: ‘A hundred years ago this was almost the edge of town’ (LS, 36). The speaker describes a deserted wasteland in which the natural landscape is dominated by factories whose gigantic presence haunts the speaker’s imagination. Fisher indicates that images of the industrial city still exist in the inhabitant’s imagination of the modern city. In this scene there is no sign of human existence. Fisher suggests that industrialisation has changed the city’s landscapes. Going back to the description of the town ‘a hundred years ago’ designates that the speaker is haunted by the Birmingham of the past, the city during the industrial revolution in the mid-nineteenth century. This haunting experience is measured against a vivid description of the industrial landscape and a scrupulous account of the city’s new layout.

In *A Furnace* (1986), an epic concerned with mapping the forces that shape our conception of the modern city, Fisher presents a different view of Birmingham through the technique of the double spiral and the superimposition of landscapes. The preface of *A Furnace* opens with Fisher’s metaphor of the city as a furnace:

*A Furnace* is an engine devised, like a cauldron, or a still, or a blast-furnace, to invoke and assist natural processes of change; to persuade obstinate substances to alter their condition and show relativities which would otherwise remain hidden by their concreteness; its fire is Heraclitean, and will not give off much Gothic smoke.84

Drawing from Blake's 'A Divine Image' in which the self and the human form is shaped like 'a fiery Forge', for Fisher it is the city that has become a furnace, a grotesque place of immense industrial energy and 'hard will'. But Fisher develops the image of the city as one in continual unseen flux in which human senses are unaware of its fiery source - because the fire is without smoke. Therefore, he suggests that the city needs to be conceived in a new way because it creates new images in people's minds just as a furnace creates new materials out of others. Just as the human subject is subjected to change in a furnace, so are stubborn topographical features which persist within the industrial scene. In the preface Fisher describes the substances of the furnace as 'precipitates'. The word 'precipitates' means that the industrial city of the past inevitably brings with it images that affect the inhabitant's apprehension of his modern milieu. Through the symbol of the furnace, Fisher intends to reveal how the new city has been produced by the industrial culture. He intends to uncover the way the industrial cultural has played a significant role in changing people's perceptions of the city. Fisher reveals Birmingham through the technique of superimposition which he derives from the late-Romantic writer, John Cowper Powys (F, vii). The technique of superimposition suggests a palimpsest through the layering of landscapes while the figure of the double spiral reveals ways of thinking about time. The depiction of the forces and counter-forces links A Furnace with the centripetal and centrifugal forces observed by the atomic physicist. Fisher's image of the city as an energy field recalls Williams's image of the city as a complex atom always breaking down (P, 177). The images of the furnace and the atom express the power of the city that pulls and repels the observer at the same time.
Fisher’s technique of setting one landscape to work with another ‘more by way of superimposition than comparison’ (F, vii) suggests two different ways of dealing with the landscape. While ‘superimposition’ implies a palimpsestic layering and placing of one landscape over the other, ‘comparison’ refers to a juxtaposition of two landscapes where one informs the other. These techniques have enabled Fisher to deal with the poem’s dense material. In *A Furnace*, the technique of ‘superimposition’ temporalises the city while ‘comparison’ spatialises it. Fisher’s method of ‘superimposition’ accounts for the complexity of the poem’s urban images, a characteristic he shares with T.S. Eliot who also creates complex layers of urban landscapes in his poetry: ‘My urban imagery was that of St. Louis, upon which that of Paris and London have been superimposed.’ Here Eliot refers to landscapes from both European and American cities. Similarly, Fisher uses local landscapes from the English Midlands (Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire) and other cities from Europe and America: Chicago, Trier, Barnenez, Ampurias, and Paris. Trier is a large city in Germany on the Moselle River. Barnenez is a megalithic cairn in Finistere, Brittany. It dates back to c 5000 BC and was destroyed by quarrying. Ampurias is a city on the Mediterranean coast in Spain and a Greek colony that dates back to c 575 BC. Some of these cities were destroyed and some abandoned. Fisher seems to connect these cities with Birmingham in order to draw attention to the processes of demolition and change that occurred in Birmingham. This idea reminds us of Eliot’s apocalyptic vision in *The Waste Land*: ‘Falling towers/ Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria/ Vienna, London/ Unreal’ (CPP, 73). This widening of the poem’s scope contrasts with Williams’s Paterson as a local/ regional place. Fisher’s neo-modernism is best revealed in his combining of the local with literary modernism’s interest in the cosmopolitan.

The figure of the double spiral helped Fisher in handling the poem's temporal dimension. As Fisher points out, 'The spiral came in early, as soon as I started taking stock of the material, letting it come into memory, seeing which elements recurred and clustered and demanded inclusion.'\textsuperscript{86} The spiral clearly designates Fisher's tactic to deal with the recurring elements of the poem. The image of the spiral works, then, as an interlacing pattern which, in turn, allowed Fisher to revisit certain themes and ideas. Fisher states that the poem has some history, and 'the sequence of its movements is based on a form which enacts the equivocal nature of the ways in which time can be thought about. This is the ancient figure of the double spiral, whose line turns back on itself at the centre and leads out again, against its own incoming curve' \textit{(F, vii-viii)}. The double spiral is presented as a temporal technique through which time is conceived in two different ways. The forward movement of the spiral suggests the forward movement of time while the spiral's returning aspect suggests the backward movement of time. As Fisher states, 'the returning spiral was ideal for the circling sense of anti-time I was after' \textit{(ITTSP, 116)}. This implies that time for Fisher is not circular but spiral because a circular movement denotes a returning to the point where the movement started, whereas a spiral movement suggests a semi-circular movement yet at the same time adding something new through the advancement to higher levels. The movements that deal with the returning aspect of the spiral (i.e. the even-numbered movements) present a hauntological ghost-like experience of place. A good example of the anti-time spiral is the second movement, 'The Return', which is the returning of the spiral that 'fetches the timeless flux' and the 'timeless identities/ riding in the flux with no/ determined form' \textit{(F, 11)}. This is the sense of the timeless or anti-time which Fisher creates through the returning of the ghosts that haunt his locale.

In a conversation with John Kerrigan, Fisher remarked: ‘[i]n the poem I was particularly concerned, unusually for me, to impose a forward-rolling verbal movement through the whole piece, set against the inherently static collage-structure and the capricious shifts of focus back and forth through historical time.’\(^{87}\) This statement underscores the poem’s technique of mapping spatial and temporal dimensions through which two opposite things are set against each other: ‘a forward-rolling verbal movement’ and a ‘static collage-structure’. The forward-rolling movement denotes the figure of the spiral while the poem, from a structural point of view, can be conceived as a collage of different movements and experiences, each of which allows us to see one direction of the spiral. Seen together, these movements constitute the whole movement of the spiral. This movement links with Fisher’s comment on the poem’s pattern ‘[w]here you revisit various themes at various times in the course of a thousand or two thousand lines’ (ITTSP, 96). So the poem’s pattern is one of recurrence and repetition. Because of this repetitive pattern, the sequence of the movements is not narrative. This non-sequential pattern is evoked through the conjuration of faces, presences, ghosts, in the even-numbered sections that interlace with the towering aspect and the upward movement that we find in the odd-numbered sections. In an interview with John Tranter, Fisher tacitly implied that he wanted to create this interlacing pattern in *A Furnace*: ‘I didn’t want it to be a cut-up, I didn’t want it to be a bag of bits. I did want it to have a certain amount of forward progression, in the sense of the episodes beating along through it. At least that was what I was after’ (ITTSP, 96). Fisher here proposes that the poem is not intended to be a collage of fragments and images but one with multiple movements that depict the confluence of energies that are at work in his imagination. This technique recalls

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Eliot's *The Waste Land* in which he presents fragmented images that are connected contextually underneath the text.

This idea allows us to see how *A Furnace* differs from *City*. *A Furnace* approaches the city from a wider perspective because it does not only concentrate on Birmingham itself but also on a whole region. But *A Furnace* follows *City* in that the latter focuses on peripheral spaces such as parks and suburbs which lie at the edge of the city, whereas the former looks at the whole region, including Birmingham. Both poems engage with revealing the nature of the historical, cultural, and social forces that shape the modern city. Given the time span that separates the publication of the two poems, they exhibit two different ways of representing the city. In *City*, Fisher does not name the city because he disliked documentary realism, as he stated in one of his interviews. By the time he wrote *A Furnace* Fisher has gained more confidence in addressing Birmingham. In light of this suggestion, *A Furnace* presents the city from a different perspective. The Birmingham of *A Furnace* is not only grounded in history and space but also universalised through the poem's wide scope. The poem has an extensive scope made possible through its technique of superimposing landscapes and the temporal spiralling of resonances. These resonances travel from the past to the present and Fisher reveals their presence in the roads of modern Birmingham. Thus, *A Furnace* continues what *City* initiated, taking one step further in examining the industrial city as a cultural product. As Fisher stated in the preface to *A Furnace*, the industrial economy has bred 'a new kind of city whose images dominated people's intelligences in ways previously unknown' (*F*, vii). This statement suggests that Fisher intends to reveal the ways in which the industrial city took shape in people's memories and visions of the future. In doing so, he can no longer address a city that only exists in the mind or that is rendered
merely through perception and limited to a particular observer but needs, in fact, to ground it in a specific time and space.

The shift from the unnamed locale in *City* (which we assume to be Birmingham) to the Birmingham of *A Furnace* marks Fisher's new conception of the city. Fisher did not specify that he is writing about Birmingham in *City* possibly because he did not have the medium through which to express a particular experience:

> Space is part of our mental life....We haven't a language for space-time. We haven't a four dimensional language at all. I suppose a lot of what we're talking about here is my perhaps rather small but insistent attempt to assume that a four-dimensional perception is somehow necessary for us to have...the moral at last! (*ITTSP*, 76)

*City* does not clarify the relationship between space and time. It does not use a specific pattern, that is, to reveal how the temporal, the fourth dimension of language, shapes the poet's memories of place. *A Furnace* can be read in the light of this argument as an attempt to create a four-dimensional language to convey a particular urban experience. This space-time language is manifest in Fisher's poetic form—the method of superimposing landscapes as well as delineating the spirals of time that recur in the poem's various locations.

The difference between *City* and *A Furnace* lies in the former's emphasis on the direct influence of war. *City* reflects an unstable period in the history of Birmingham due to the effects of the Second World War. Fisher felt the need for expressing a lost sense of place which the war engendered. During the 1980s, the effects of the war have diminished. *A Furnace* suggests the idea that the war can be looked at as an event that has intensified the poet's feelings towards places and memories.

John Kerrigan notes that by the time Fisher wrote *A Furnace* in the eighties he had moved north of Birmingham to the hills of Staffordshire and this allowed him to distance himself...
Commenting on *A Furnace*, Kerrigan suggests that ‘Fisher’s Modernist allegiances have generally made his work more spatial than historical in reach’. These statements imply that *A Furnace* differs from *City* in terms of the balance between the spatial and the temporal and that *City* tends to reveal more the poet’s interest in the historical dimension. Kerrigan’s observations may be true to some extent. The reason for Kerrigan’s view that *A Furnace* is more spatial than temporal comes perhaps from Fisher’s widening of the spatial scope of the poem evident in the various European and regional places which the poem revisits. It is not only Birmingham that Fisher concentrates on in *A Furnace* but other cities and territories, some of which are not English: Chicago, Trier, Barnenez, Paris, and Ampurias. Fisher justified the use of these ‘civilisation sites’, as he called them, by stating that in the 1980s he was able to ‘get to some of them’ and that he ‘couldn’t speak of places he had not experienced’ (*ITTSP*, 117). In this sense, *A Furnace* reveals modernism’s interest in the cosmopolitan more than *City*. During the *City* period, Fisher did not leave Birmingham and this somehow imposed certain limitations on the poet’s treatment of his locale. Neil Corcoran argues that ‘Fisher’s later work differs from his earlier in being more overtly and persistently concerned with local histories and topographies’ (Corcoran, 171). Corcoran’s view that *A Furnace* is more ‘overtly local’ than *City* contrasts with Kerrigan’s. The two critical perspectives here typify the kind of indeterminacy which Fisher’s work elicits.

Arguably, Fisher’s work represents the city in a new way by blending the cosmopolitanism of early modernist poetry with the provincialism of post-war poetry. The influence of Eliot’s *The Waste Land* on Fisher’s *City* seems unavoidable, principally in terms of

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Fisher’s preoccupation with death and destruction, urban decay and renewal, and formal and technical issues such as the use of a collage of fragmentary sordid images of the industrial landscape. Such characteristics are lucid in both *City* and *A Furnace* where Fisher juxtaposes disconnected images with no logical or narrative sequence. Indeed, *City* revisits Eliot’s *The Waste Land* not only in registering squalid and dull post-war landscapes but also in adopting a collage of heterogeneous materials that move towards achieving a unified whole. One of the characteristics of the modern long poem is the attempt to incorporate diverse materials and strive to generate, at the same time, an interlacing pattern through which these elements can be claimed to have unity.

In the beginning of *City* Fisher reveals that the demolition of buildings turned the city into a wasteland where houses had been destroyed and turned into a mass of brick rubble where streets are left out of shape. This description suggests how the Second World War has negatively influenced the industrial urban space. The second prose passage re-emphasises this landscape of utter destruction where ‘the entire place has been razed flat, dug over, and smoothed down again’ (*LS*, 29). Amidst this destruction, Fisher acknowledges the triumph of industrialisation by portraying factories as gigantic ghosts. The verse passages reinforce this sense of urban ruin through the use of fragmentary images of emptiness and voids.

In ‘By the Pond’, the fifth section of *City*, Fisher returns to the industrial theme presented in the beginning of *City*. The first six lines introduce fragmentary images of the natural and industrial scene: the pallid water, the fishermen’s shack, the wire fences, and ashen sky. The first prose passage registers the observer’s perception of the industrial landscape:

Brick-dust in sunlight. This is what I see now in the city, a dry epic flavour, whose air is human breath. A place of walls made straight with plumbline and trowel, to dessicate and
crumble in the sun and smoke. Blistered paint on cisterns and girders, cracking to show the priming. (LS, 35)

Fisher focuses on the visible industrial scars of a changed landscape. Fisher is another literary voice in the tradition of urban writers and this poem echoes Dickens’ description of Stagg’s Gardens:

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood.89

Like Fisher, Dickens dwells on the permanent and temporary marks left by rapid industrial work which also evoke biblical narratives of unnatural rupture. Fisher mixes social realism with religious implications. The phrase, ‘dry epic flavour’, echoes T.S. Eliot’s ‘What the Thunder Said’, in which the arid landscape of dry sand is an ironic counter-point to an epic narrative of journeying that promises a symbolic yielding of human hope. But for Fisher the urban landscape in which ‘men spit on the paving slabs’ and ‘little boys urinate’ is more real in its sordid details. And like Eliot who anticipates the ‘drip drop drop’ of water to replenish the febrile land, Fisher looks for signs of human regeneration that will make ‘old men and dead men seem young’. There is a similar suppressed yearning for a lost youth that the modern city cannot recover.

Perhaps the most vivid description of this sense of industrial and urban ruin occurs in ‘The Entertainment of War’, the third section of City, where the effects of the Second World War on the city’s physical and social space are strongly felt. Fisher portrays people suffering from the trauma of the war. They have become silent, unable to express their sorrow; women are indifferent to their surroundings. The city, in a sense, becomes a necropolis reminding us of

Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. What *City* makes explicit is that the war created social, political, economic, and cultural problems that shaped the development of the modern city. ‘The Entertainment of War’, a narrative poem with an autobiographical tone, presents the experience of a ten-year-old child during the bombing raids of the Second World War. The poem expresses a pungent insight into the nature and meaning of war. Fisher shows how the war wipes out the cultural and social life of the modern city as the city turns into a battlefield. The poem, further, underlines that the war had indelible and unforgettable repercussions, precipitating a psychological problem as is the case with the child’s grandfather who lived in a state of trauma after the war. The title, ‘The Entertainment of War’, poses the question: what is entertaining about war? There is nothing entertaining about war because it entails destruction. The title then is an oxymoron. The title also suggests that the speaker denies war and feels indifferent to its effect. The speaker’s trauma results in a denial of war, in order to repress the ill-effects as a survival strategy. ‘I had no pain of it; can find no scar even now’ (*LS*, 34). The poem is presented through the eyes of the child whose indifference to the effects of war and his constant fictionalising of the events, made into the spectacle of cinema, enable him to survive and continue his daily life.

The use of the past tense throughout the poem reveals that the speaker is remembering this experience. The first three lines introduce the observer remembering the garden where his aunt, her two children, and a woman from the neighbourhood were killed during the bombing raids. The garden is likened to ‘a burst pod filled with clay’ (*LS*, 33) and this image suggests that the bomb exposed the garden like petals uncovering private space and revealing its secrets. This metaphor also indicates the fierceness of the bombs that fell on the garden. The next three lines describe the sound of these bombs, giving us additional information about the ferocity of the bombs, albeit an oddly domestic image: Fisher likens the sound of these bombs to ‘banging
doors'. He then shows that these bombs targeted the city's infrastructure, destroying the cramped houses and thus changing the city's layout. So Fisher here underlines the cultural effects of the war on the city's social and urban space. The speaker then describes in a comic way the experience of seeing his uncle's corpse blasted 'over the housetops and into the street beyond'.

The poem, in a sense, underlines the speaker's modest or reserved attitude towards his relatives. He is seen as a detached observer of the incident and that there is a gap between the speaker and his cousin manifest in the speaker's discovery of his cousin's notepad, which reveals drawings of naked girls. He later remarks that: '[i]n his lifetime [he] had not known him well'. This suggests that war revealed the secrets, uncovering the place as a palimpsest. The speaker then writes about his grandfather who, after identifying the corpses, lived in a state of trauma. The shocking memory of the dead relatives haunts the child's father and grandfather but not the speaker himself. The speaker's detached tone is clear in his description of his relatives as 'marginal people I had met only rarely' (LS 34). Later this lack of interestedness is reinforced by the speaker's description of the death of the four relatives as a 'bloody episode of four' and that he had no pain of it. The last three lines assert his lack of emotional involvement and indicate further that he did not realise the meaning of this experience. By 'the fiction' the speaker means that it does not have a real effect on his life. The word 'fiction' suggests that the subject of the poem is treated lightly.

Fisher's response to the Second World War differs markedly from Wilfred Owen's response to the First World War. The purpose of war poetry of the First World War was didactic. It intended to reveal to the public the reality of war and the horrifying tragic experience of the trenches and to shatter people's false opinions about military glory and nationalistic and patriotic feelings. By way of contrast, Fisher's response to the Second World War is personal, less serious
and undidactic. The speaker in ‘The Entertainment of War’ feels indifferent to war and its traumatic effects. This lack of indulgence marks Fisher’s attitude to war which contrasts with Owen’s in his war poems.

Fisher’s neo-modernism is evident not only in his outlook on war but also in subscribing to the local. Fisher’s interest in the English Midlands, particularly his native city, Birmingham, reveals him as a ‘local’ poet. He described himself as a provincial poet who is interested in the provinces and not London or Oxford or Cambridge (ITTSP, 39). This description aligns him with the Black Mountain School and American _avant-garde_ modernists, particularly with William Carlos Williams’s poetics in that his poetry explores the city from a non-metropolitan perspective. Fisher’s relation to American modernism is manifest in his portrayal of the city as a historical palimpsest and his use of a poetic form that combines prose and poetry. When asked about his early influences, however, Fisher acknowledged both American and European traditions:

I’ve been told that I’ve been influenced by Americans. An enormous number of people come to mind, some American, some not. You might just as well, for me, talk about Rilke’s Paris or Kafka’s Prague or the imaginary towns that Paul Klee made up or Kokoschka’s paintings of towns he worked in. (ITTSP, 61)

This interest in cosmopolitan modernism and the artistic techniques used in paintings suggests a European impulse that underlies Fisher’s work. This European impulse, which also comes from Fisher’s interest in Russian Formalism, Surrealism, and Cubism, helped lead to Fisher’s neo-modernist technique of representing the city. His description of himself as a ‘cubist poet’\(^9\) is a remark that reveals his early modernist artistic techniques and asserts the visual aspects of his poetry.

Despite this European impulse in his writing, Fisher’s *City* is cognate with Williams’s *Paterson* in terms of revealing the emergence of a new urban and social reality which the modern city embodies. Like Williams, Fisher revives the city by uncovering its historical, cultural, and spatial dimensions, by writing about the local or provincial, and by viewing the city as a historical palimpsest. But the two poets differ in their vision of the city as a palimpsest. In *Paterson*, the image of the city as a palimpsest is problematic. As Weimer points out, Williams’s *Paterson* is not successful in fusing the two different Patersons (one present and one past) that emerge in the poem, possibly because the verse and prose passages do not clearly correspond. Arguably, Fisher is more adept in revealing how the city of the past interacts with the new city which the modern urban culture has produced. Fisher’s idea that the city has ‘laid itself out in the shape of a wheel’ where ‘[t]he ghost of the older one still lies among the spokes of the new’ (*LS*, 32) instances this intersection. The image of the wheel is apposite because it suggests that there is continuity with the past, that the modern city cannot entirely erase the imprints of the nineteenth-century industrial past.

While *Paterson* depends heavily on historical material and local details (stories, anecdotes, newspaper clippings that chronicle the life of Patersonians), *City* somehow achieves a balance between historical and spatial particulars (that is, presenting urban renewal and changes in urban space as well as reflecting on the historical development of the city). The prose passages in *Paterson* are historical, some of which contain factual and non-factual detail. Fisher does not use such historical realism in his description of the city. The urban and historical reality which Fisher reveals lies mainly in the effects and impressions the city leaves on his mind. While Fisher writes about the city of the mind, Williams wanted to reveal Paterson as a historical, cultural, and spatial reality. In Weimer’s view, Williams has not succeeded in conveying this

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reality: ‘A substantial difficulty is that the city of Paterson never emerges in sufficient richness of detail to persuade us of its reality’ (Weimer, 117). What Weimer suggests here is that Williams failed in creating a real city despite the poem’s rich materials that chronicle the life and culture of Paterson. Williams’s use of documentary realism worked against his goals. Williams’s goal to reveal that ‘a man in himself is a city’ does not clearly develop within the formal conditions which Williams set himself.

Fisher appears to be conscious of this problem in Paterson, namely the problem of not creating a distance between the poet and the city, between Paterson the protagonist and Paterson the city. In City Fisher surpasses Williams in constructing how mind and city interact. Though Fisher internalises the city, he retains its actual physical space. To put it differently, throughout City Fisher presents the interplay between the subjective and the objective and though he elides the boundaries between the city of his memories and the objective real space, he presents both as separate entities. Ian Gregson points out that ‘the relationship between the objective and subjective is complex and unstable.’

While this observation, to a certain extent, is true, what Fisher is doing in his poetry is more complex than that:

I had an ambition to make the transaction so clean that I could just take from a thing—a street with a name to it—sufficient properties to exist verbally in my poem and at the same time to be answerable to the reality should anybody go and look at it. I was writing about a street people could recognise, but I still was writing about a street that was in my poem and not just stupidly reported as it might be in a very ordinary piece of documentary.

In this significant remark, Fisher draws a sharp distinction between the reality of the objective world and the reality of the subjective one which his poems create. This passage contrasts with

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Williams’s personal and documentary realism in Paterson, that is, the use of historical documents, newspaper clippings, personal letters, and factual details about Paterson. In the above-quoted passage, Fisher refers to his technique of defamiliarizing the street by including certain of its characteristics, such as its name, in the poetry. In this way his poems create a real world that corresponds with the actual physical world outside them. The reality which Williams’s Paterson fails to achieve is an imaginative one, because the poem refers more to the city and its historical and cultural reality.

This distinction between the two poets draws upon the argument concerning the contentious relation between art and reality: should art (and indeed literature) reflect reality or deflect it? It has become a critical cliché that literature reflects reality or offers a one-to-one representation of the real world. The concept of defamiliarization adopted by Fisher diverges from the idea that poetry reflects the outside world. What defamiliarization entails in Fisher’s case is a deflection of reality because his poetry transforms the outside world by making it strange and by breaking the habitual modes of perception in order to reveal the artfulness of the observed object. Common objects are estranged in order to enhance a fresh perception. Fisher’s use of defamiliarization, moreover, suggests that artistic creation is a deflection and transformation of reality because art involves ‘making strange’ and thus modifies the idea that art does not actually mirror the real world. Fisher, that is, does not believe in a one-to-one relationship between poetry and the city. From the scope and formal intention of Williams’s poem we discern that Williams sought to articulate the reality of Paterson and its social, cultural, and historical life. To reiterate a point which I discussed in the first part of this chapter, Williams’s modification of the poem’s form—which at first was a plan of four books and later extended into a fifth and a sixth book—suggests that the poem will continue to record the new
and will end only with the poet’s death. The poem, that is, will continue to reflect the reality of the city in terms of cultural and historical development.

Fisher may have been inspired by Williams’s *Paterson* but he modifies Williams’s representation of the city. By not naming the city in *City*, Fisher creates a city of the mind:

I am interested in getting an effect of indeterminacy in those things. Most of the *City* writing is meant to be about a city which has already turned into a city of the mind. Where the writing is topographical it’s meant to do with the EFFECTS of topography, the creation of scenic moments, psychological environments, and it’s not meant to be an historical/spatial city entailed to empirical reality’ (*ITTSP*, 56)

Fisher’s rejection of a ‘historical/spatial city entailed to empirical reality’ carries, arguably, an implicit critical response to Williams’s approach in *Paterson*. The above-quoted passage uncovers Fisher’s way of modifying Williams’s idea of the city by stating that his poetic intention is to create a ‘city of the mind’, contrasting it with the imaginative city that is entailed to a particular time and space. Fisher indicates that he is not concerned with topography but with the *effects* of topography and urban impressions which the real city of time and space projects onto the mind of the poet. The Birmingham of *City* is a mental, mnemonic construct, an internal projection of the mind where we perceive the city through the observer’s eyes. *City* exhibits memories, concepts, and impressions where we see Fisher as a witness to the city’s change and growth throughout the years and it is particularly in this respect that Birmingham leaves an indelible impression on his mind. The concept of ‘the city of the mind’ suggests the play of memory and history in the poetic vision of place. Though Fisher draws heavily on the nature of urban development in the post-war era, he is still writing about a city undefined in time and space. This approach renders his description of the city universal.
While Fisher’s *City* differs from Williams’s *Paterson* in various respects, his poem *A Furnace* shares with Williams’s poem the technique of the spiral which recalls Williams’s evocation of the vortex in *Paterson*:

Jostled as are the waters approaching  
the brink, his thoughts  
interlace, repel and cut under,  
rise rock-thwarted and turn aside  
but forever strain forward—or strike  
an eddy and whirl, marked by a  
leaf or curdy spume, seeming  
to forget. (*P*, 7)

This stanza describes Paterson’s thoughts as a vortex which is lucid in Williams’s choice of verbs. In his poetic descriptions of the natural landscape, Williams also creates a vortex of energy: ‘The wind in/ the trees, the hurricane in the/ palm trees, the tornado that lifts/ oceans (*P*, 182). The closing lines of *Paterson* IV, moreover, suggests the end of the spiral: ‘This is the blast/ The eternal close/ The spiral/ The final somersault/ The end (*P*, 204). These examples reveal Williams’s imagining of the city’s landscapes in terms of vortices, which suggest that poetry cannot actually mould the city. Williams’s *Paterson* presents the triumph of the city over the poetic mind through its energy and the heterogeneous materials it brings forth. Williams, in this sense, denigrates early modernism’s attempt (particularly Eliot’s) to shape the city through the literary mind.Williams suggests through the image of the vortex, in other words, that it is not the human mind that conjures these vortices but the city itself and this could be a response to Eliot’s continuous effort to reveal the power of the literary mind to evoke the literary allusions of the past. Williams gives the city a kind of autonomy by allowing it to subvert the poetic mind.

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94 See William Sharpe’s essay “That Complex Atom” in which he states that Williams denounces the poetic tendency to govern the sprawling vitality of city life, celebrating instead the city’s victory over its literature.
Unlike Fisher’s spiral, Williams’s vortex suggests the energy of the city without a clear organizational pattern. This is probably what led Joseph Riddel to suggest that Paterson has no true centre. The poem has no true centre because of the many vortices it draws upon. In A Furnace, however, Fisher creates various movements enhanced by the double spiral that has a defined centre – the fourth section entitled ‘Core’, which is the chamber of a still movement.

The image of the double spiral reveals Fisher’s idea of the poem as an energy system. This idea clearly links Fisher’s poetry with American poetics, particularly with Ezra Pound’s (and indeed Williams’s) idea of the poem as a vortex, drawing everything in, including the reader. Vorticism emerged from Cubism and Futurism but it also goes beyond these extremes by focusing more on the idea of movement in images. Superseding the tendency to freeze time in cubist paintings, Pound and the vorticists, such as Wyndham Lewis, concentrate on the poem as a dynamic field of energy. The imagists, Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and H(ilda) D(oolittle), attempted to revolutionise imagism by capturing the movement in the image. Pound included the vortex in order to animate the various static images of the imagist poem. Fisher’s image of the double spiral denotes the poem’s spiralwise movement from the centre and back towards the centre again, thus, like a vorticist painting, drawing the observer’s eye into the centre. The structural movement of A Furnace indicates the departure and the returning aspects of the spiral, and the fourth section of the poem entitled ‘Core’ suggests the centre of the spiral or its still movement. This structure resembles a vorticist painting which uses bold lines and strong colours to draw the reader’s eye towards its centre. An example of a vorticist painting which draws the reader’s perception towards its centre is William Roberts’ The Vorticists at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel, Spring 1915, which portrays a group of vorticists gathering around a table with one

95 Joseph N. Riddle, The Inverted Bell, p. 176. See also Riddel’s footnote no. 18 in which he contrasts Williams’s vortex and the overabundance of detail with Pound’s city as a vortex of concentrated forces.
holding a magazine entitled *Blast*. The vortex is manifest in the verbal movement or in the use of verbs that denote the poem’s visual features. The verbal movement of the poem pulls the observer to the scene, thus creating an interaction between the observer and the outside empirical world. Fisher’s *A Furnace* is based on verbal movements. The forward movement shows the observer’s imagination of the place while the returning movement suggests how this place influences the observer’s mind. The two spirals then create a reciprocal relation between observer and place.

Fisher differs from Williams not only in terms of the techniques he uses but also in the way he appears to question the nature of literary representation. Like Williams, Fisher internalises the city but because he does not specify his locale, he was able to avoid what Pound called ‘direct treatment of the thing’. Fisher’s idea of creating a ‘city of the mind’ recalls Italo Calvino’s remark that ‘the city must never be confused with the words that describe it. And yet between the one and the other there is a connection.’

Fisher’s imagined city corresponds with the real city but at the same time cannot be reduced to it. His interest in the nature of representation and the different modes of perception links with Rob Shields’ remark that ‘The City is a slippery notion. It slides back and forth between an abstract idea and concrete material.’ What Shields stresses here is that the representation of an object is inextricably linked with the object represented. The street in Fisher’s passage which I quoted earlier slides from reality to imagination and this technique resembles Fisher’s idea of ‘float[ing] real things into a fictive world’ (*ITTSP*, 59).

Fisher’s neo-modernism can be measured against the critical debate in early modernism between Woolf’s and Joyce’s modes of literary representations. In her essay ‘Literary

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Geography' (1905), Woolf writes: 'A writer's country is a territory within his brain; and we run the risk of disillusionment if we try to turn such phantom cities into tangible brick and mortar.' Woolf argues here that the city is an imagined space and that there is a difference between the imagined city and the real one. Implied also in her statement is that the imagined city is not reducible to the real one. By way of contrast, Joyce’s representation of Dublin in *Ulysses* suggests a form of correspondence between real and imagined cities. To Frank Budgen, Joyce wrote: 'I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.' Joyce’s statement suggests a form of documentary realism and implies that the real city and its representation can be analogous. It is difficult to take Woolf’s and Joyce’s standpoints as final, because Joyce’s representation of the city as realistic appears so only when it is juxtaposed with Woolf’s. Interestingly, Fisher’s poetry of the city revises these extremes. The street in Fisher’s poems and the street outside them are both real. They are separate, yet there is a connection between them. Fisher, then, may not agree with Woolf’s idea that the representation of the city is something different from the city itself. Neither is he on the side of Joyce whose representation of the city comes close to the concept of ‘documentary realism’, of which he is often sceptical.

Fisher’s *City* anticipates the Situationist International in terms of its focus on the idea of the city of the mind, the *flâneur*, and the concept of psychogeography. The idea of the ‘city of the mind’ recalls one of Fisher’s statements in a poem entitled ‘Talking to Cameras’: ‘Birmingham’s what I think with’ (*LS*, 285). To think with the city possibly means to internalise it by the perceptive mind. Here Birmingham and the poet’s mind are paralleled. Thinking with the city recalls Williams’s dictum: ‘No ideas but in things’ which means that writers should pay
attention to the concrete particulars of the locale in order to develop any ideas about it. In *City*, Fisher questions the effects of the geographical environment on the behaviour of the wanderer (the central observer in *City*). This observer can be regarded as a *flâneur* who walks the streets and observes people and objects. Fisher reveals the *flâneur* as unable to figure out whether what he perceives is real or a mere dream. The problem that the *flâneur* encounters is that ‘the imaginary comes to [him] with as much force as the real, the remembered with as much force as the immediate’ (*LS*, 43). The speaker’s powerful perception is locked in the claustrophobic landscapes of his mind. The observer’s problem is, in a sense, Prufrockian, where he appears to be shackled by a state of indecisiveness.

Additionally, like the *flâneur* in Poe’s story ‘The Man of the Crowd’, the *flâneur* in *City* has a strong, inevitable attraction towards observing the city and the crowd. *City* is cognate with Poe’s story in that they both underline a gothic strain by emphasising the mysterious realities of the outside world. The observer in *City* imagines and interprets the spaces around him even those which he does not see, as in when he walks the streets imagining people in their houses at night: ‘I sense the simple nakedness of these tiers of sleeping men and women beneath whose windows I pass’ (*LS*, 42). *City*, in this sense, is about how we experience the spaces around us and how we interpret their perceptual reality. Fisher’s *flâneur* does not only contemplate what is visible but also what is invisible or hidden. Fisher relates two modes of perception here: the imaginary and the real. It is as if he is suggesting that the *flâneur* does not only reflect on the real but also on the imaginary.

In Fisher’s *City*, the *flâneur* represents a way of seeing the city, a way of experiencing urban space when the city becomes a territory of the mind. The more the observer dwells on his perception of the cityscapes, the more he travels into the depth of his psyche. At times the
flâneur trusts the power of his senses: ‘Walking through the suburb at night, as I pass the dentist’s house I hear a clock chime a quarter, a desolate brassy sound. I know where it stands, on the mantelpiece in the still surgery’ (LS, 42). At other times he appears sceptical of his perception: ‘I come quite often now upon a sort of ecstasy, a rag of light blowing among the things I know, making me feel I am not the one for whom it was intended, that I have inadvertently been looking through another’s eyes and have seen what I cannot receive’ (LS, 43).

Through the experience of the flâneur, Fisher deconstructs the reality of the observer’s perception. The observer’s feeling, that he has been looking through someone else’s eyes, denies his own perception. He cannot establish the thing that makes his perception special when the boundaries between outside and inside, reality and imagination, become fuzzy and porous. At the end of the poem the observer realises that the world of reality and the world of perception are contradictory. Caught in this world of contradictions, the observer realises that he is forced to endure its paradoxical notions, as the oxymoron: ‘a polytheism without gods’ clearly signifies.

Thus through the perception of the flâneur, Fisher draws attention to the problematic nature of the city. City explores the perception of the flâneur in daylight and at night. Fisher constructs his text according to this binary system. By day, the observer is unable to configure the city’s space or to see order in it. He struggles to come to terms with its layout. The constant emphasis on the city’s palimpsestic layering is to show that the modern city possesses a different nature. At night, the observer sees a labyrinth of streets and finds it impossible to ‘trace the line of a single one of them by its lamps’ (LS, 29). This line recalls T.S. Eliot’s ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’ where Eliot presents the image of a nocturnal wanderer passing by street lamps that beat like ‘a fatalistic drum’ (CPP, 24), an image that creates a sense of spatial order. Through a duality of perspectives Fisher reveals that the city is unfamiliar to the perceiver.
Walking the nocturnal city can be seen as an attempt to overcome the city’s unfamiliarity and resistance. For the walker, the city remains asleep. The observer wants to perceive the city but discovers, in ‘Starting to Make a Tree’, that ‘[t]he city at night has no eye, any more than it has by day, although you would expect to find one’ (LS, 41). Fisher describes the city as though a cyclopic monster, but it has no eye – the city is a faceless autonomous being. We search, like Daedalus, in a labyrinthine world wanting to locate its epicentre as though looking for its central self. The city here is mythic because it defies archetypal designs. It violates the flâneur’s perception. This problem is stressed in relation to how the city is perceived by the urban spectator who attempts to uncover its true nature and decipher the complex feelings it generates.

The act of perceiving the city has been emphasised by numerous writers, artists, and urban historians. The city is frequently represented as a spectacle whether in painting, photography, or literature. Seeing the city as a text, for instance, implies a visual representation. The city in literature is an imagined space, mostly represented in metaphors that involve perception. As Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy point out, the city is represented in visual terms in order to make it legible: ‘To “see” the city functions as a quest for legibility; to render it legible is also meant to make it coherent and knowable, integral and governable’ (Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy, 5). In Fisher’s City, the attempt to ‘see’ the city is one way of coming to terms with its multifarious nature. In City, the flâneur perceives the city through his photographic eye. He is not a passive observer but someone quite sensitive to, and conscious of, the play of light and darkness in perception. Throughout City, light plays a significant role in the flâneur’s perception. As the observer states, ‘light keeps on separating the world like a table knife: it sweeps across what I see and suggests what I do not’ (LS, 43). This statement corroborates that the observer’s perception is determined by light. The above quote denotes that light participates
in creating what is not visualised and that light demarcates not only what is seen from what is unseen but also what is real from what is imaginary and what is remembered from what is immediate.

In *A Furnace*, Fisher presents the problem of perception through variations of light, a topographical feature of the scene. In an interview with Peter Robinson, Fisher refers to light as a sensory fetish in the cityscape (i.e. a fixation, or something that persists in the scene):

The ‘fetishes’ which accumulated over the years to the point where they seemed to need me to articulate them, insofar as I could, in *A Furnace*, were mostly sensory, on a long scale from a nuance of scent or the *fading light* to monstrous architecture and skyscapes....I remember talking about the problem in the mid-1960s with Simon Cutts, a strong-minded poet who was at that time concentrating his force by limiting himself to a light, pinkish boulevardier aesthetic somewhere in Satie territory (*ITTSP*, 118) (my italics).

Some of these sensory fetishes are perceptual (such as variations of light) and some olfactory (which relate to the sense of smell). The monstrous architecture and the skyscapes are also types of fetish for Fisher. They articulate the poet’s feelings about what he perceives. The ‘pinkish boulevardier aesthetic’ refers to the beauty of light and fashion the walker observes in the thoroughfare.\(^{100}\) In the same interview, Fisher stated that the ‘fetishes’ were what he called, in the preface to *A Furnace*, ‘obstinate substances’ (*ITTSP*, 115). This suggests that *light* is one of these ‘obstinate substances’ and ‘topographical precipitates’. Through the sensitive eye of the observer, Fisher represents how the city is perceived in daylight and at night. This duality of perspectives from which the observer approaches the city’s objects and the urban crowd links markedly with Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization. Fisher limits himself to light using it as a defamiliarizing technique. In *City*, the observer’s imagination is shaped by sensory effects. In

\(^{100}\) This recalls Charles Baudelaire’s comment on the artistic achievements of the painter Constantine Guys to whom he dedicates his essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life’. For Baudelaire, Guys exhibits an extraordinary use of watercolours that reflect a distinctive painterly modernist style.
‘The Wind at Night’. for instance, the tenth section of *City*, the observer wanders at night imagining the setting of the houses in front of which he passes. He imagines the bathroom of the house ‘painted a peculiar shade of green’ (*LS*, 42) and obscured by a yellow light. The observer later acknowledges that this is a dream, and this enables Fisher to transcend the boundaries between reality and dream through the observer’s perception.

These hallucinatory sensory effects exemplify what Fisher called ‘perceptual thinking’: ‘in trying to evoke urban things I had as it were dissolved things and made them strange so that I was free from the entailments of them in ordinary reality, so that I could in fact use them within the compass of my own perceptual thinking, my own way of working’ (*ITTSP*, 59). Commenting on the idea of ‘perceptual thinking’, which Fisher relates to Shklovsky’s defamiliarization, Peter Barry argues that the phrase seems a contradiction in terms (if read in light of Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization), suggesting that Fisher may have meant to say ‘conceptual thinking’: ‘thought and perception have to be distinguished and it is a serious error to mistake the eyes for the mind.’101 Theoretically, Barry is right in his conclusion. Yet a closer look at Fisher’s text may clarify what Fisher may have meant by ‘perceptual thinking’. It is possible to think of ‘perceptual thinking’ in terms of what Shklovsky said about poetry in ‘Art as Technique’: that poetry is ‘thinking in images’ which Shklovsky later rejected as an appropriate account of poetry.

The phrase ‘perceptual thinking’ denotes that the observer imagines something and describes it in visual terms. If we virtually suggest that ‘perception’ refers to reality and ‘thinking’ to imagination, then it is possible to say that Fisher presents objects through a ‘realistic imagination’, by creating an air of reality in the description of an imagined object. The major issue which Fisher’s poetry, particularly *City*, questions is: should poetry reflect reality or refract it? The central problem in *City* is that reality and imagination are both strong in the observer’s

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mind: 'The imaginary comes to me with as much force as the real' (LS. 43). Fisher is highly adept at creating reality through a sense of visual perception which renews our interest in the appearance and mood of a post-war urban landscape. He uses Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization not only to reveal the reality of perception but also to show the artistic qualities of the object by prolonging that perception.

The opening lines of *City* suggest that the observer is conscious of the play of light and darkness in the perception of objects. Commenting on the how the nocturnal streets look, the observer states: 'At night their rounded surfaces still shine under the irregularly-set gaslamps, and tonight they dully reflect also the yellowish flare, diffused and baleful, that hangs in the clouds a few hundred feet above the city's invisible heart' (LS. 29). Again, this image reminds us of Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' in which the speaker describes the reflection of lunar light and street lamps and the way they affect his mood and memory. Fisher reveals that the observer's eye is sensitive to the 'yellowish flare' which these streets reflect. In the next paragraph, the observer depicts the district as impenetrably black, and the lamps of the streets 'shin[ing] oddly'; the factory is clear with 'solid rows of lit windows'. These examples describe the effect of light in the observer's perception. Fisher is conscious of how shadows and darkness at night create a hallucinatory vision as in the perceiver's description of 'rows of trucks':

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The rows of trucks
Extend: black, white,
White, grey, white, black,
Black, white, black, grey,
Marshalled like building blocks. (LS. 32)
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In this passage, from 'Lullaby and Exhortation for the Unwilling Hero', light determines visual objects. The rows of trucks are seen as black, white, and grey. At night, the rows of trucks look
different to the observer through light and shadow. They appear ghostlike, marshalling like building blocks. Fisher suggests that the city at night evokes a dream-like vision and light makes objects appear different to the perceiver. In this example Fisher uses light both metaphorically and literally. In ‘Lullaby and Exhortation for the Unwilling Hero’, the observer states that the sky at night is sometimes visible: ‘From these pavements you can sometimes see the sky at night, not obscured as it is in most parts of the city by the greenish-blue haze of light that steams out of the mercury vapour lamps’ (LS, 32). Fisher here suggests that light sometimes obscures our vision at night. He does not use light as a defamiliarizing technique but suggests that light here becomes a barrier to defamiliarize the scene. Street lamps here emit a greenish-blue light while streets in the first section of the poem reflect a ‘yellowish flare’. These references to light reveal Fisher’s defamiliarizing of the city.

Arguably, one of the signs of Fisher’s neo-modernism is this revival of Shklovsky’s concept of defamiliarization. In an interview with Robert Sheppard, Fisher remarks: ‘I have to make the city strange in order to be able to move my mind in it at all’ (ITTSP, 78). For Fisher, the concept of ‘making strange’ allows a freedom of expression. Moreover, in ‘For Realism’, Fisher stated that he made urban things strange (ITTSP, 59). The poem ‘For Realism’ oscillates between the real and the ideal. It starts by addressing the real but towards the end it renounces the kind of realism it tried to record: ‘plenty of life there still’ (LS, 220). Fisher makes urban things strange through this shift from the real to the ideal. The real in the poem is the image of industrial life when the workers come out from a factory after they finished their shift. Later Fisher turns to the ideal by trying to evoke ‘the after-images of brickwork’. In his essay, ‘Art as Technique’ (1917), Shklovsky stresses the relation between defamiliarization and perception through which objects are made ‘unfamiliar’:
The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.*

Shklovsky argues that there is a difference between perception and knowledge, or between representing objects through perception (showing them as artistic, aesthetic and unfamiliar) and describing objects as they are (as they are real and familiar). What is important is not the object as it is known but as it is perceived because perception helps to highlight the artfulness of the object. Defamiliarization, in this sense, prolongs perception. In ‘Lullaby and Exhortation for the Unwilling Hero’, Fisher describes how we know the roads and how they are perceived at night: ‘They are still lit meagrely, and the long rows of houses, three and four storeys high, rear black above the lamps enclosing the roadways, clamping them off from whatever surrounds them’ (*LS*, 32). This example suggests that the roads have become unfamiliar to the observer. Fisher’s skill lies in the way he transforms the ordinary urban streets into aesthetic, artistic objects. Significantly, after defamiliarizing the roads, Fisher describes the city as ‘unknown’ (*LS*, 33) which indicates that the observer cannot come to terms with the city. The phrase ‘unknown city’ suggests that the city is unfathomable, impenetrable, and unfamiliar. The observer sees the city as unknown because it ‘deflect[s] the eye of the developer’ (*LS*, 33). There is a relation here between automatic perception and the unperceived.

In ‘The Sun Hacks’, the sixth section of *City*, Fisher defamiliarizes the couple. Through a series of nocturnal images seen against light and shadow (a couple embracing, a girl in front of a café, and a man in the police court), Fisher uncovers how these ordinary people appear to the

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observer at night. The observer sees a couple embracing but his description of what is invisible is
more significant: ‘It was hard to see where the girl’s feet and legs were. The suspicion this
aroused soon caused her hands, apparently joined behind her lover’s back, to become a small
brown paper parcel under the arm of a stout engine-driver’ (LS, 37). These lines exemplify how
light sweeps across what the observer sees and suggests what he does not. Interestingly, when
the observer does not see clearly, the girl’s figure takes a different shape: it is as if a man is
holding a brown paper parcel under his arms. It is a sort of optical illusion and the couple is
defamiliarized through perception. This example suggests a contrast between defamiliarization
and the ways epistemologists postulate that objects are known through perception. There is an
on-going controversy in epistemology between realists and representationalists: realists argue
that what we are aware of in perception are the objects (tree, chair, etc.), while
representationalists contend that what we are aware of in perception are not the objects but their
appearances. 103 Fisher, in the example where he describes the couple’s appearance, is a
representationalist because what he is concerned with is not the couple itself but how it appears
to the observer’s eye.

In the next paragraph, Fisher defamiliarizes the girl who stands in front of the café
through light and shadow: ‘A café with a frosted glass door through which much light is diffused.
A tall young girl comes out and stands in front of it, her face and figure quite obscured by this
milky radiance’ (LS, 37). This passage describes how the girl appears to the eye of the observer
through the back-lighting. The girl’s figure is distorted by the diffused light. When the girl steps
out into the lit pavement, however, she becomes visible ‘as a coloured shape, moving sharply. A
wrap of honey and ginger, a flared saffron skirt, grey-white shoes’ (LS, 37). The juxtaposition of

Entry on epistemology.
these passages suggests a dual perspective: the girl’s figure with and without much light. The previous passage reveals the play of light and colour in perception, as if Fisher is describing a girl in a painting.

Fisher’s interest in depicting how light and colour affect the way objects are perceived suggests the influence of Impressionism. In the paintings of Claude Monet, for instance, a French painter and leader of Impressionism, light plays an important role. In order to show how light changes the look of objects throughout the day, Monet produced various versions of the same painted object as in the grainstacks series. Like Monet, Fisher is aware of the play of light and its effects on perceived objects. Monet’s profound impact on other poems by Fisher is evident. In an interview, Fisher stated that in his poem ‘Matrix’ there are things to do with Monet’s waterlily paintings (ITTSP, 54). Fisher in ‘Matrix’ appears as if he is describing a landscape in terms of the techniques of painting: ‘Turf and aubrietia/ painted around the stones’ (LS, 279). In section ten of the poem, Fisher defamiliarizes the natural scene when the observer becomes unable to perceive any difference ‘whether the water-lilies/ are blue, or the water, / or the sky in the water’ (LS, 283).

In City, after defamiliarizing the city, Fisher juxtaposes it with London. This juxtaposition is significant for it suggests that Fisher envisions the city from a metropolitan perspective or at least with the metropolis in mind. The fact that Fisher represents the city as harbouring crime and obscuring the observer’s vision suggests that Fisher intends to draw attention to the nature of his locale. He hints at the idea that Birmingham is different from London because of its size: ‘This could never be a capital city for all its size. There is no mind in it, no regard’ (LS, 37). For Fisher, Birmingham remains poorly represented and therefore in part unseen. And because it does not attract the literary or artistic eye it lacks a cultural heartland.
Fisher’s attempt to parallel his city with London implies that he sees it as a synecdoche for all cities; hence he refrains from naming it. This idea links Fisher with William Carlos Williams who also represents Paterson as a paradigm for all cities. Fisher juxtaposes his city with London in order to throw light on its social and cultural problems. Both Williams and Fisher celebrate the non-metropolitan city that has not been represented in art. So in a sense they rethink modernism’s celebration of the metropolis by drawing the reader’s attention to the regional city that lies at the periphery.

In the last passages of ‘The Sun Hacks’, Fisher defamiliarizes the urban crowd. In this description of the crowd, a new sense of the city’s nature is emphasised through the description of the crowd as a ‘composite monster’. The city has not been given enough attention by the authorities and has not been represented in art: ‘Most of it has never been seen’ (LS, 38). The observer describes seeing ‘no individuals but a composite monster’. The crowd appears to the observer as a gigantic mass of necks, limbs without extremities, and trunks without heads. This hallucinatory vision is enhanced by the dazzling sunlight. Fisher defamiliarizes the crowd through light and they become unrecognisable. The ghostly appearance of the crowd in the streets recalls Baudelaire’s vision of the ghostly crowd in the streets of Paris. For Baudelaire, Paris appears as a mighty giant: ‘O swarming city, city full of dreams, where the ghost accosts the passer-by in broad daylight! Mysteries flow everywhere like sap in the narrow veins of this mighty giant.’

Fisher’s image of the crowd changes when light declines:

Later, as the air cooled, flowing loosely about the buildings that stood starkly among the declining rays, the creature began to divide and multiply. At crossings I could see people made of straws, rags, cartons, the stuffing of burst cushions, kitchen refuse. (LS, 38)

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The dazzling sunlight and the sun's declining rays permit the perceiver to see the crowd from two different perspectives. There are two versions of the crowd here. In the second one, Fisher defamiliarizes the crowd. The people in the crowd are caricatured because they do not look like humans. Fisher zooms in on the crowd and describes a girl standing in front of the Grand Hotel. This description reminds us of Fisher's earlier description of the girl in front of the café: 'Outside the Grand Hotel, a long-boned carrot-haired girl with glasses, loping along, with strips of bright colour, rich, silky green and blue, in her soft clothes. For a person made of such scraps she was beautiful' (LS, 38). Here Fisher uses 'scraps' that suggests part of the observer's perception of the girl's clothes rather than the whole. This detailed, visual, and artistic description of the girl has the purpose of prolonging perception which, as Shklovsky suggests, is an aesthetic end.

In City, Fisher uses spectrality as a defamiliarizing technique. Spectrality can be defined as something that returns from the past and persists in the scene. The concept of spectrality has been exhaustively studied by Julian Wolfreys as a phenomenon that governs the texts of a group of London writers: Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, and Elizabeth Bowen, to mention only a few. Arguably, Fisher's poetic practice exemplifies Wolfreys' notion of 'hauntology'. In City, the city is presented as a network of signs: light, ponderous architecture, brick dust, and factory works which inscribe the spectral aspect of the city. These signs invoke a sensory response in the observer:

The wind drives itself mad with messages,
Clattering train wheels over the roofs,
Collapsing streets of sound until
Far towers, daubed with swollen light,
Lunge closer to abuse it. (LS, 41)

Here imagination and materiality interact in Fisher's description of the towers moving closer. The poem's interest is not so much in the material reality of objects but in how this materiality dissolves leaving indelible signs on the mind. Throughout City, there is always something spectral in the observer's perception: 'Out of the swarming thoroughfares, the night makes its own streets with a rake that drags persuaded people out of its way: streets where the bigger buildings have already swung themselves round to odd angles against the weakened currents of the traffic' (LS, 41). Here the observer describes how the night creates spectral, unreal streets where buildings have become immaterial. The buildings look unfamiliar through the observer's perception. Observing the streets engenders an apparitional memory, as Walter Benjamin remarks in The Arcades Project: '[w]hoever sets foot in a city feels caught up as in a web of dreams.' Fisher's attempt to articulate the way the city appears through perception and to respond to the hauntological aspect of the city aligns him with Eliot's spectral, 'unreal city' in The Waste Land, which owes so much to Baudelaire's vision of phantasmagoric space. Eliot's London is transformed into an 'unreal city' when it is haunted by the Baudelairean spectre.

In A Furnace, the double spiral, which stresses the poet's attempt to give a shape to temporal forces, reveals spectrality as a literary device. Through this technique, Fisher generates a pattern to unveil the return of time that haunts his memory. Birmingham is presented as a spectral city where the ghosts of the dead haunt modern sites and locations:

Under that thunderous
humbug they've been persistently
coming and going, by way of
the pass-and return valve between the worlds,

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not strenuous; ghosts
innocent of time, none the worse,
for their adventure, nor any better; (F. 18)

In an indignant tone, the stanza reveals ghosts among the irregularities that disturb our world and prevent us, through their irregular and unacknowledged presence, from interacting with the place we inhabit. In *City*, the observer describes a metaphorical blue light in a churchyard where he witnesses ‘cooling and shaping heads, awakening eyes’ (*LS*, 38). These lines reveal the ghosts of the dead haunting the observer, disturbing his perception of the real world around him. This conjuration of heads and eyes links with the ghosts which the observer sees in the first movement of *A Furnace*:

Ancient
face-fragments of holy saints
in fused glass, blood-red and blue,
scream and stare and whistle...
they pierce the church wall
with acids, glances of fire and lenses out of the light
that wanders under the trees and around
the doomed grave-cover
lichened the colour of a duck’s egg. (F. 5)

Here the observer refers to the ghosts that govern his hallucinatory vision. It is possible to think of these ghosts as a type of fetish that persists in the scene. Here the ghosts that return from the past disturb the observer’s perception of the church as a familiar place. In ‘The Many’, the sixth movement of *A Furnace*, Fisher also writes about the ghosts of the past that appear in a deserted church:

Presences
flaring out from the wet flints
at Knowlton ruin,
multiple as beans, too small and irregular
to distinguish or call names. Divide; survive. (F, 39)

Knowlton is an abandoned church in Dorset. Fisher defamiliarizes this church in order to stimulate a new perception of this rural place. Fisher forces us to see this ordinary place in an unfamiliar or strange way by drawing attention to the ghosts of the place.

The same technique is used in ‘Introit’, where Fisher suggests that buildings look to the perceiver different under the influence of light:

old industrial road,
buildings to my left along the flat wastes between townships wrapped in the luminous

haze underneath the sun,
their forms cut clear and combined into the mysteries, their surfaces soft beyond recognition. (F, 1-2)

The buildings and townships which are wrapped in the luminous haze have changed their appearance. They are obscured by the haze and are no longer solid because their surfaces have dissolved. This image reminds us of Baudelaire’s ‘Les Sept Vieillards’ in which the houses appear taller in the fog: ‘One morning, when in the dingy street the houses seemed to be stretched upwards by the mist’ (Baudelaire, 193). In both Baudelaire and Fisher, dwellings become unreal and ghost-like. Fisher defamiliarizes the houses through the haze of light that surrounds them.

Fisher’s description of spectral presences at Knowlton in the passages I quoted above contrasts with Eliot’s image of the vanishing faces in the secluded chapel of Little Gidding:

History may be servitude,
History may be free. See, now they vanish.
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern. (CPP, 195)

Fisher may have been influenced by Eliot’s description of the ghosts in the chapel, presented in *Little Gidding* as a place of intersection between time and the timeless. Commenting on the chapel, Grover Smith writes:

To this place one must come only for the purpose of prayer, the key to eternity. And in prayer one could attain communion with the dead who have prayed here and have become part of eternity here, and together with them one could draw closer to that full union prefigured by the Pentecostal fire.¹⁰⁷

Fisher indicates that the ghosts of the past not only make the church unrecognisable and unfamiliar but also disturb the observer’s sense of place. Eliot’s imagining of the compound ghost in the second movement of *Little Gidding* reveals a familiar ghost. It is a dead master and someone the observer is intimate with:

I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable. (CPP, 193)

The presence of the spectral in *A Furnace* helps us read Eliot’s *The Waste Land* not only as a collage of fragmentary images or ‘a heap of broken images’, but also as a poem concerned with the evocation of spirits, ghosts and the return of the dead. Michael Levenson underlines this spectral aspect of the poem, noting Eliot’s interest in Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* whose myths chronicle the return of the dead as wandering ghosts that haunt the living. As Levenson notes, the

answer to the question of ‘What is the wind doing’ in the manuscripts of *The Waste Land* is: ‘Carrying/ Away the little light dead people.’" In ‘Death by Water’, Eliot also describes the drowned Phoenician Sailor who enters the whirlpool of the sea and got carried away in the vortex of the dead. Thus, though *A Furnace* is cognate with *The Waste Land* in revealing the tenuous boundaries between life and death, they differ in terms of the spectral. There are traces to the past within the present topographical landscape that remain as spectral beings.

In *City*, Fisher’s imagination of industrial places and sites is governed by the presence and absence of spectral and ghostly appearances: ‘I am not able to imagine the activity that must once have been there. I can see no ghosts of men and women, only the gigantic ghost of stone’ (*LS*, 36). The absence of ghosts here links with *The Waste Land* where the absence of rubbish in the Thames, in ‘The Fire Sermon’, suggests that people have become ghost-like. Constantly internalised, places and people lose their materiality and dissolve into signs. Consequently, in *City* and *A Furnace*, Fisher does not present an image of Birmingham so much that he presents the city as a network of signs and traces. To put it differently, we are not reading a representation of the city so much as we are being asked to visualize and imagine a phantasmagoric space and time. Fisher, that is, presents signs of objects rather than the objects themselves in order to defamiliarize what the observer sees.

In *City*, spectrality is suggested by Fisher’s image of the city as a wheel: ‘where the ghost of the older one still lies among the spokes of the new’ (*LS*, 32) (my italics). Indeed, the word ‘ghost’ here implies that images of the industrial city return from the past to haunt the present. The image of the wheel suggests that the city is constantly turning, revolving, or repeating itself through this circular movement. It keeps rotating around a centre, bringing ghosts and

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apparitions to the observer’s mind. In ‘The Sun Hacks’, the sixth section of City, the observer imagines the crowd as ghosts made of ‘straws’, ‘rags’, and ‘cartons’ (LS, 36). They are spectralised and de-humanised. In this description, Fisher presents a non-anthropomorphic view of the crowd: ‘Masks under white caps wake into human faces’ (LS, 36). Indeed, Fisher sees the city and its people as an ephemeral sign system like, for example, the description of the crowd as a composite monster which is a sign of power: ‘In the afternoon of dazzling sunlight in the thronged streets, I saw at first no individuals but a composite monster’ (LS, 37).

In both City and A Furnace Birmingham can be seen as an endless operation of ghostly apparitions which could be unearthed in one location in City and in various locations in A Furnace. In City these apparitions reveal the uncanniness of place, while in A Furnace they are a means of producing the city’s mythological identity. That is, in City, Fisher’s defamiliarizing of objects and people leads to viewing them as spectral and not as a concrete reality; in A Furnace, he mythologizes the spectral. Fisher uses two different ways of describing the spectral in City and A Furnace. In ‘The Return’, the second movement in A Furnace, Fisher writes about the force that breaks, bringing:

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\begin{align*}
\text{timeless identities} \\
\text{riding in the flux with no} \\
\text{determined form, cast out of the bodies} \\
\text{that once they were, or out of} \\
\text{the brains that bore them; (F, 11)}
\end{align*}
\]

These ‘timeless identities’ are the ghostly apparitions that travel through time to haunt the modern city. These timeless identities, which haunt the locale, are mythologized through their atemporal continual reappearance. Fisher does not defamiliarize these timeless ghosts but he mythologizes them as part of the city’s identity.
Fisher’s poetics of the modern city reveals a spectral urban memory where the observer’s perception is fundamentally characterised by experiences of encountering the Other in space. Fisher constantly conjures from the past these timeless identities that return to haunt the observer’s memory. These ghostly apparitions reveal the imaginative and intellectual power which the modern city engenders. Fisher spectralizes the temporal forces in *A Furnace*. Using the image of the spiral, Fisher conjures the presences or the gods that come out of the wet flints at Knowlton ruin in the fourth section ‘The Many’. In section VII, ‘On Fennel-Stalks’, Fisher describes the towering giant heads which the wind raises:

Another wind, steady and slow from the north, freezing and far higher; and with it, rising from behind the ridge, gigantic heads lifted and processing along it, sunset-lit, five towering beings looking to be miles high, their lower parts hidden, their lineaments almost stable in their infinitely slow movement. (*F*, 45)

These gigantic heads can be construed as temporal forces that move back and forth through time, but at the same time construct a forward spatial movement.

While *A Furnace* creates an urban myth through the intensity of, and focus on, the historical and cultural forces that haunt and shape the modern city, *City* lacks this aspect. The absence of myth in *City* is implied in Horovitz’s contrast between *City* and *Paterson*:

Williams in America is very eagerly concerned to find a ‘myth’, a ‘vision’, a ‘means’ etc., which will give relevance to his city, which will provide him and his poetry with some sort of ‘form’ through which and by which the man and the city and the poetry can have a
community....Fisher in the Midlands starts with no such overall concept. Rather he is concerned to perceive and to declare his perception.\textsuperscript{109}

In \textit{City}, the city is not mythologized as a result of Fisher’s use of the defamiliarization technique. The absence of myth in \textit{City} corresponds with Matthias’s comment that \textit{City} is ‘a kind of demythologized \textit{Waste Land}'.\textsuperscript{110} That is, it is like \textit{The Waste Land} (in that it engages with urban paralysis and decay) but excludes myth by separating the world of the living from the world of the dead. What Matthias means by ‘demythologization’ is that because Fisher describes the city from an odd angle of vision (i.e. from a particular point of view limited mainly to an observer who has tuned himself to a particular way of perception), he is not revealing a world view or a public vision of the city. Arguably, given the idea that Fisher defamiliarises the city through his unusual and peculiar perception, one can suggest that ‘defamiliarization’ is the opposite of ‘mythologizing’ because while the former makes things less familiar in order to stimulate fresh perceptions, the latter uses the familiar in order to explain what is less familiar. Eliot mythologizes the city in \textit{The Waste Land} by transcending the boundaries between past and present, as is the case when he places Tiresias in the modern world of London. Fisher, on the other hand, suggests through defamiliarization that the city has become unfamiliar because it estranges the individual.

By conjuring the ghosts that haunt modern sites and locations, Fisher creates a modern urban myth in \textit{A Furnace}. Fisher’s mythic concerns are evident in creating a timeless time derived from Basil Bunting’s \textit{Briggflatts}:

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And I think what Basil did classically in *Briggflatts* is to establish a timeless time. You’re conscious of time passing, you’re conscious of the faculty of memory and the faculty of search in the memory, and the bringing of life from the past. I suppose that, yes, I would want to do that. I want to be free to go from Achilles, as I understand Achilles, who is a person in the book, to my great-great-great uncle William Fisher, who is a figure in a census return which I happen to have read on a microfiche. It’s Homeric for me. As are certain moments from my life (*ITTSP*, 99).

Fisher creates myth through the timeless time which we see in the returning of the spiral that brings the ghosts back to haunt the living. Fisher wants to move from the classical myth of Achilles to a personal myth that involves his relatives. The conjuration of timeless identities in the second movement, ‘The Return’, is a good example of the shift from classical figures such as Achilles to modern figures such as William Fisher:

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Timeless identities,
seeming long
like the one they called Achilles,
or short, like William Fisher,
age ten years, occupation, jeweller,
living in 1861 down Great King Street
in a household
headed by his grandmother, my ancestress
Ann Mason, fifty-seven, widow,
occupation, mangler; come in
from Hornton, back of Edge Hill,
where the masons were quarrying for Christminster. (F, 15)
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Fisher parallels the Greek mythic figure Achilles with his modern relatives. By giving these modern characters a mythic significance, Fisher adapts Eliot’s notion of the mythical method in which continuous parallels are made between antiquity and contemporaneity. Though ‘William Fisher’ is defined in place and time (that is he is defined in terms of where he lives, his age, and occupation), he is one of the timeless identities that haunt the speaker. Fisher then creates an urban myth, instead of reviving the classical myths of the past. Myth here operates as spectral
presence linking us to the lost identities of a social and unnamed history. Fisher appears to be
derivative of Eliot’s placing of Tiresias in Pimlico. Fisher’s demythologizing technique
demythologizing because he gives more significance to William Fisher than Achilles) is
manifest in creating a myth of the present with William Fisher and Ann Mason, the speaker’s
grandmother, as central figures. Fisher, in this sense, does not centralise his poem on classical
myths but seeks to create a modern urban myth.

In a brief comment on the relation between City and A Furnace, Jeremy Hooker observes
that A Furnace, unlike City, is rooted in history and myth:

[T]he ‘world’ of A Furnace is in more than one sense larger than that of City, not only
because it opens on a wider tract of country, with roots in history and myth, but also
because nature in the poem is a source of imaginative energy, transformation, and
renewal. This is the crucial difference between A Furnace and City, in which imagination
is without power in the world it perceives....It is rather the disconnection between the
living and the dead, and between mind and matter, that makes City a static poem, with the
poet as observer frozen in his alienated state, whereas A Furnace is magically (in the
Powysian sense) fluid and metamorphic.111

In City Fisher does not really explain the significance of the spectral and how it is linked to the
present. In A Furnace he connects the two worlds through the spectral where place becomes
charged with resonances that bridge the gap between the world of the dead and the world of the
living. In Paterson, Williams was not successful in bridging this gap between the past and the
present and this is manifest in his continual effort to bring the new which the cultural, historical,
and social life of the city brings forward. Eliot, by contrast, bridges the world of the past with
that of the present through the concept of myth and Tiresias’ unifying of multiple voices in the
poem. The problem with City is that it does not bridge this gap between the living and the dead.

111 Jeremy Hooker, “The centre cannot hold”: Place in modern English poetry’, in Hans-Werner Ludwig
and Lothar Fietz (eds). Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives (Cardiff: University of
The observer is deprived of imaginative power because he cannot live in two worlds at the same time: ‘I want to believe I live in a single world’ (LS, 43). This statement implies that the observer lives an unstable life, fluctuating between the world of impressions and the world of power that lies outside him. Throughout City the observer is consumed by the power of what he sees. The mind and the city in the poem are constantly penetrating each other. The power of the city to enter the mind and the power of the mind to decode the city come to an end with the observer’s surrender to a world that keeps receding: ‘I cannot lay the light across the world and then watch it slide away’ (LS, 43).

While City uncovers the power of the city to create impressions and effects on the mind and the often limited power of the observer’s perception, A Furnace reveals, in fact, a stronger faith in the power of the imagination evident in the observer’s ability to resurrect and revive the cultural and historical resonances that shape modern urban life. Such resonances include the unforgotten timeless identities, like the old woman (a peasant born in the city), a historical and mythic figure, Achilles (the Greek warrior), urban figures (William Fisher and Ann Mason), a religious identity (Lazarus), and a literary one (Hawkins). In City, Fisher’s historical view of the city is revealed in the palimpsestic structuring: ‘Between this place and the centre, a mile or two up the hill, lay a continuous huddle of low streets and courts, filling the marshy valley of the meagre river that now flows under brick and tarmac’ (LS, 36), whereas in A Furnace Fisher mythologizes the historical voices of the past, describing them as natural phenomena and observable facts. By mapping these forces in the spiral image, Fisher actually attempts to give a shape to the historical anarchy which Eliot referred to in ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ (1923). Eliot praised Ulysses in terms of its manipulation between contemporaneity and antiquity (SP, 177). Arguably, A Furnace shows a relation between the modern urban world and the historical
and cultural past through the poem's organisation of seven movements in which there is a parallel between the odd-numbered movements which depict the landscapes of the modern industrial city and the even-numbered movements that map its historical past. In this sense, unlike Joyce, Fisher in *A Furnace* offers a new way of organising the historical voices of the past (through the principles of the spiral and superimposition).

In conclusion, I have shown how Fisher endorses and modifies early modernist techniques of representation. Through a new poetic form, Fisher articulates a new kind of city and its social and cultural forces. Tracing the difference between *City* and *A Furnace* in terms of representing Birmingham enables us to see Fisher's new sense of place. I have explored how Fisher's poetry merges the aesthetic of Williams with the early modernist concern with the cosmopolitan. Using Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization allows Fisher to articulate how post-war culture gave rise to a new kind of city. Fisher implies by revisiting Shklovsky's artistic technique that his regional/provincial city can no longer be represented by traditional modes of representation.
CHAPTER THREE

Reading and Writing the City:
The Work of Iain Sinclair

This chapter will examine Sinclair’s literary representation of the city in *Lud Heat* (1975) and *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997). The former, published by Sinclair’s Albion press, gained prominence after the publication of Peter Ackroyd’s novel *Hawksmoor* (1985), which acknowledges and draws its material from Sinclair’s poem. *Lud Heat* can be considered Sinclair’s first major work and one that paved the way for his in-depth look at London in *Lights Out*. Composed of poetry and prose, *Lud Heat* is divided into several sections. The first section, ‘Nicholas Hawksmoor, His Churches’, revolves around the psychogeography of Hawksmoor’s churches in East London. In this section, which informs the whole poem, Sinclair presents a psychogeographic reading of Hawksmoor’s churches, uncovering a web of spatial forces which he believes Hawksmoor created in his plan of rebuilding the churches after they were destroyed by the Great Fire in the seventeenth century. Underlying Sinclair’s view of the churches is the idea that place possesses occult and mysterious energies that continually exert a powerful impact on social and urban space. One of the important aspects of the poem is Sinclair’s use of the churches as a literary device to uncover the political, cultural, and social forces that animate the contemporary city. Sinclair represents Hawksmoor’s churches through spatial and temporal coordinates in order to fathom the depth of London and to reveal its hidden historical and mythological patterns.

The notion of revealing what is hidden informs Sinclair’s *Lights Out for the Territory* which develops further the concepts of psychogeography and palimpsest in *Lud Heat*. Subtitled 9
Excursions in the Secret History of London, the book explores the historical and cultural life of London through nine excursions, each of which offers a new sense of London’s perpetual presence and the indelible impact it leaves on the walker’s mind and psyche. Sinclair provides us with ways of perceiving London by uncovering its hidden language and symbols.

i. Reading and Writing London in Lud Heat

Lud Heat engages with revealing London in terms of reading and writing. The city is envisioned as a palimpsest where Sinclair sets to excavate its hidden past by examining Hawksmoor’s churches and their relation to urban space. Sinclair uncovers the historical and spatial forces that continually reassert themselves. In his introduction to the 1995 re-issue of Lud Heat and Suicide Bridge, Michael Moorcock suggests that late twentieth-century writing has increasingly turned towards historical and occult themes. Lud Heat revives the occult and gothic strain of the fin de siècle period of the late nineteenth century. By reviving the occult that characterised the city a century before, Sinclair unmasks the dark reality of London that lies beneath everyday life. We are presented with an alternative London that is continually haunted by the revenants of the past. The revival of occult themes in Lud Heat is possibly due to the influence of the Second World War that altered not only the city’s fabric but also the inhabitant’s sense of the past. During the war the majority of London’s churches were bombed and this encouraged Sinclair to explore Nicholas Hawksmoor’s plan of rebuilding the churches after the London fire of 1666. In a sense, the war’s destructive force rekindled in post-war writers the determination to re-examine the role of history. To get a sense of how the war revives in the inhabitant the sense of the past and the

present, one can look at *Four Quartets* and particularly *Little Gidding* where Eliot describes the Pentecostal flames descending and his experience of meeting the ‘familiar compound ghost’. *Little Gidding* captures the depth of thought and experience manifest in the way Eliot turns the fire of the air-raid bombs into the Christian fire of purgation.

In *Lud Heat*, Hawksmoor’s London churches (St Alphege at Greenwich, St Anne at Limehouse, St George-in-the-East, Christ Church, St George in Bloomsbury, St Mary at Woolnoth) are essential sites that inspired Sinclair’s occult and psychogeographic thinking. The term ‘psychogeography’ is significant for understanding Sinclair’s way of writing about London. He once stated: ‘For me, psychogeography is a way of psychoanalysing the psychosis of the place in which I happen to live. I’m just exploiting it because I think it’s a canny way to write about London.’ The idea of ‘psychoanalysing the psychosis of place’ suggests Sinclair’s obsession with uncovering the impact of place on the human psyche. There is no doubt that Sinclair is aware of Freud’s ‘the uncanny’ given that he alludes to the term ‘psychoanalysis’ and the ‘canny’. The word ‘canny’ is a pun. Sinclair is interested in both: the canny and the uncanny. Freud’s essay ‘The Uncanny’ (1919) suggests that the uncanny is a reality that has been made, by the sub-conscious mind, unfamiliar by repression. The uncanny thus refers to a hidden reality often revealed through dreams and hallucinations, for example. Conscious of the term ‘uncanny’, Sinclair does not describe his method of writing about London as ‘uncanny’ because analyzing place is a method that is frequently used by writers. Sinclair uses the term ‘psychoanalysis’ in reference to his method of uncovering the workings of space on the inhabitant’s behaviour. The opening sentences of *Lud Heat* underline the influence of the churches on the spectator’s mind:

‘Moving now on an eastern arc the churches of Nicholas Hawksmoor soon invade the

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113 Quoted by Stuart Jeffries, ‘On the Road’, *The Guardian*, Saturday, April 24, 2004. This review was consulted at: http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,12084,1201348,00.html.
consciousness, the charting instinct' (LHSB, 13). For Sinclair, psychogeography is a shrewd method of writing about London and a medium of communicating a particular urban experience. In Sinclair’s writing, psychogeography offers a theoretical framework within which the relation between image and experience, psyche and geographical space, are explored.\textsuperscript{114}

Sinclair’s psychogeographical imagination in \textit{Lud Heat} is manifest in the way he investigates the occult influence of Hawksmoor’s churches on urban space. In the first section of the poem, ‘Nicholas Hawksmoor, His Churches’, the churches are viewed as centres of malicious energies connected with murders and slaughters such as the Ratcliffe Highway in 1811, Jack the Ripper murders in 1888, and the Kray Brothers’ murder in the 1960s. Sinclair’s belief that Hawksmoor encoded space in his plans suggests that there is something hyper-real about the churches that needs to be revealed: ‘[I]t is possible to imagine that he did work a code into the buildings, knowingly or unknowingly’ (LHSB, 17). Here the churches are thought of beyond their literal meaning because they are built on old religious sites and close to graveyards. Besides, each church contains a pyramid in their yards. This led Sinclair to believe that there is a mystic relation between these churches and the events that occurred throughout history: ‘[e]ach church is an enclosure of force, a trap, a sight-block, a raised place with an unacknowledged influence on events enacted within their nome-lines’ (LHSB, 10).

Sinclair engages in remapping the city, given the historical and geographical significance attributed to Hawksmoor’s churches. He imagines the churches as being strategically placed on urban space and forges the idea of equal geographical distances among them. Imagining the churches as sites of occult power connected by triangles of ley lines, Sinclair mythologizes the churches, presenting them beyond their literal time and space:

\textsuperscript{114} For more information on the theoretical background and origins of the term ‘psychogeography’ see Merlin Coverley’s book, \textit{Psychogeography} (Herts: Pocket Essentials, 2006).
A triangle is formed between Christ Church, St George-in-the-East and St Anne, Limehouse. These are centres of power for those territories; sentinel, sphinx-form, slack dynamos abandoned as the culture they supported goes into retreat. The power remains latent, the frustration mounts on a current of animal magnetism, and victims are still claimed... These churches guard or mark, rest-upon, two major sources of occult power: The British Museum & Greenwich Observatory—the locked cellar of words, the labyrinth of all recorded knowledge, the repository of stolen fires & symbols... (LHSB, 5).

Here Sinclair creates spatial dimensions through the triangulation motif. Imagining triangles among the churches suggests a system of order. Urban space is given a shape through the pattern of connections that govern it. Sinclair quotes from the architect’s letter to Dr. George Clarke that the city has been reduced to ‘a Chaos of Dirty Rotten Sheds’ and was left to ‘Run into an ugly inconvenient self destroying unweildly Monster’ (LHSB, 14). The letter indicates that Hawksmoor intended in his plan to give order to the city’s space.

The passage above also designates that the British Museum and Greenwich Observatory are sources of occult power that mysteriously influence the churches which are seen as the ‘locked cellar of words’. These churches are historical and cultural symbols. Sinclair is keen on highlighting what is missing from the scene: the churches are there but the culture they supported is neglected or forgotten. By reconnecting the occult power of the churches with Hawksmoor’s interest in Egyptian mythology, Sinclair revives this forgotten culture. In this sense, Lud Heat revives the cultural history of London. Sinclair keeps returning to the mysterious presence of the pyramids in the vicinity of the churches and their relation to Egyptian mythology and culture. These pyramids indicate that Hawksmoor was interested in exotic cultures. Sinclair explains the occult power of the churches through Egypt. As Sinclair points out, this occult power comes from ‘an admix of Egyptian and Greek source matter’ (LHSB, 10). He uncovers that the architectural style of the churches contributes to the vortex of energies in space. This
architectural style is reflected in Hawksmoor's designing of strange steeples that make the churches pyramidal in structure.

Another aspect of Sinclair's mythologizing of the churches appears when he reveals the presence of a mysterious relation between the churches and the events that occurred in the past:

I spoke of the unacknowledged magnetism and control-power, built-in code force, of these places; I would now specify...the ritual slaying of Mary Jeanette Kelly in the ground floor room of Miller's Court, Dorset Street, directly opposite Christ Church...the Ratcliffe Highway slaughter of 1811, with the supposed murderer, stake through heart, trampled into the pit where four roads cross to the north of St George's-in-the-East (LHSB, 21).

The first sentence suggests a hypothesis while the sentence that starts with 'I would now specify' implies that Sinclair is giving credence to his theory of occult power. He gives examples that manifest the effect of this power. Through these murders the churches form a network of malignant energy. Commenting on Sinclair's poem, the poet Allen Fisher observes that the main theme in Lud Heat is how place resonates with 'energy': 'Your concern is energetic and about energy where the place becomes symbol of ourselves.... [There are] evidences of intersections where the energies, on the map, in your consciousness and the land come together and depart forming triangulations as those shown in Gordon's "Prehistoric London: Its Mounds and Circles." Fisher's comment, that there is a vortex of energies in Lud Heat, underlines an important strain in Sinclair's writing that derives from the Beats and the Black Mountain school.

In an interview, Sinclair acknowledged the influence of Charles Olson's 'open-field' poetics and that Olson became 'a major figure' for him. Arguably, Sinclair's view of the poem as a

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‘confluence of energies’, to borrow Allen Fisher’s phrase, owes a great deal to Olson’s conception of the poem as a system of energies. In ‘Nicholas Hawksmoor, His Churches’, the significance of Sinclair’s idea of energy is manifest when he describes the elements of Blake’s *Jerusalem* as conducive to energy: ‘the procession, the chain of body images & solar fires, punishments, ecstasies, planetary revenge: ENERGY’ (*LHSB*, 26).

Sinclair presents the theme of occult power of the churches and constructs a mythology of London. He uses the churches to reveal a mythology of place. He suggests that St George occupies a place that harbours the literary ghosts of the past such as Yeats, Blake, and Milton: ‘So many spectres operate along these fringes: Yeats in the British Museum, at the time of the Ripper murders, researching into Blake…Milton: his early-morning walks over the ground where St George was to be built’ (*LHSB*, 15). Sinclair refers here to a reality that cannot be apprehended: that the sites of the churches still contain the psychic energies of the past. These energies, Sinclair claims, are present but invisible. The sites which the churches occupy, Sinclair notes, are the burial places of Blake, Defoe, and Bunyan. These literary figures who were buried in the area, Sinclair implies, form another source of the occult power of the churches. This awareness of the historical, literary past and its impact on the city’s geography marks a new conception of urban space. So Sinclair uses the churches to uncover an alternative reality in urban space.

For Sinclair, Hawksmoor’s plan is not totally clear: ‘We can mark out the total plan of the churches on the map and sift the meanings. We can produce the symbol of Set, instrument of castration or tool for making cuneiform signs’ (*LHSB*, 16). Here Sinclair sees Hawksmoor’s plan of the churches as illegible and embarks on interpreting it through signmaking. This approach is problematic because of Sinclair’s ambivalent attitude towards Hawksmoor’s plan. At times he
appears to have actually sifted the meanings when he suggests, towards the end of the first section, that ‘breaking the code of the churches gives us twin fears: fire and inundation’ (LHSB, 37). Here Sinclair appears to have managed to uncover Hawksmoor’s coded plan. At other times he is uncertain of what Hawksmoor intended: ‘The scenographic view is too complex to unravel here, the information too dense; we can only touch on a fraction of the possible relations’ (LHSB, 16). This ambivalent attitude has led Sinclair to interpret Hawksmoor’s churches through other sources. For example, quoting Herodotus, the Greek historian, Sinclair remarks:

‘The site of the building is almost an island, for two canals have been led from the Nile and sweep round it, one on each side, as far as the entrance...’ Which is St Anne: whose arms are the Limehouse Cut and the River Lea. She stands at the gate of the swamp, the Isle of Dogs; Anubis-guarded, jackal, patron of embalmers, chief citizen of the Necropolis (LHSB, 34-35).

This is one way of explaining the mysterious occult power of the churches by linking them with Egyptian geography. Sinclair projects St Anne’s church onto the Greek document and believes that Herodotus’ description of a site near the Nile bears a geographic reference to St Anne and the River Lea. It is as if Sinclair is suggesting that Hawksmoor was aware of this geographical resemblance and encoded it in his plan.

In the first section of Lud Heat, Sinclair is interested in Hawksmoor’s treatment of the city as a text. Hawksmoor appears as an impersonation of Sinclair in his way of reading and writing the city:

Hawksmoor the Surveyor examined and selected the sites, walked over the ground, drew up the plans, made wooden models, rapidly turned out a sequence of sketches, possible structures to contain some portion of his amazing polyglot energies. He had that frenzy, the Coleridge notebook speed, to rewrite the city....So there are sketches cancelling sketches – and the churches themselves are incredible culture grafts, risky quotations studded into a central and repeated image of strength, key symbols that remain secret. (LHSB, 14)
Here Sinclair refers to Hawksmoor’s remapping of the city and the way Hawksmoor encoded the churches, as Sinclair claims, with an imaginative, unacknowledged energy. Hawksmoor who had a powerful imagination like that of Coleridge intended to rewrite the city through his plan. The idea of ‘sketches cancelling sketches’ suggests Hawksmoor’s remapping of the city and his vision of it as a palimpsest. Like Hawksmoor, Sinclair rewrites the city. He does so by superimposing various interpretations of Hawksmoor’s churches. The churches are envisioned as a palimpsestic text. They are imagined as a text that is continually erased, transformed, and interpreted. ‘It is enough to sketch the possibilities’, Sinclair writes. He intends to provide the possibilities of interpreting space given the dense information he provides: triangulations, occult power, Hawksmoor’s plan, and the churches as burial sites. Sinclair interprets the churches as if he were interpreting a text. A good illustration of this is when Sinclair imagines the churches as mortuary temples:

At St Anne the church (Mortuary Temple) is to the east of the pyramid...the stone causeway (the Highway, becoming Commercial Road and West Ferry Road) does lead to the desert, the great swamp of the Isle of Dogs, which did hold a single chapel, now destroyed, its only ritual focus. Or, alternatively, we can read St George as the Mortuary Temple (the body of Williams) with the Highway connecting to St Anne on the edge of the desert, as the place of final rites. (LHSB, 34)

Here the two churches are seen as a palimpsest from which the first interpretation is removed and replaced by the second. He provides two different readings of the historical geography of the two churches. So Sinclair uses the churches in order to present a textual representation of London.

According to Kevin Lynch in his book The Image of the City (1960), the city is like a text because we tend to imagine it through a pattern of recognizable symbols. Both the city and the text are ‘legible’ through this pattern. He suggests that like the ‘printed page...[which] can be
visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols...a legible city [has] ...districts or landmarks or pathways [that] are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an over-all pattern." Sinclair’s view of Hawksmoor’s churches as specific landmarks related by a pattern of interconnections and triangulations in urban space suggests, in Lynch’s terms, the city as a text. Relevant to this pattern is the description of the churches as having equal distances: ‘Christ Church is in alignment with St George-in-the-East and St. Alfege, St George-in-the-East and St Luke are equidistant from Christ Church’ (LHSB, 17). The relation between Sinclair’s reading and Hawksmoor’s writing is problematic because Sinclair’s reading of the churches is an act of writing them. Here we are unsure of whether Sinclair is revealing Hawksmoor’s plan or he is constructing his own plan of the churches. Sinclair elides the boundaries between his reading of the churches and Hawksmoor’s rewriting of the city.

Sinclair’s pattern of triangulations suggests an ordered system of geometry. Imagining a web of spatial triangulations among Hawksmoor’s churches suggests the city as a text to be deciphered and decoded: ‘The buildings taken together, knotted across the city, yield a further word’ (LHSB, 7). This web of connections is, as Sinclair states, superimposed on the city: ‘The web is printed on the city and disguised with multiple superimpositions’ (LHSB, 16-17). The word ‘superimposition’ suggests the city as a palimpsest. The web is ‘disguised’ and this implies that Sinclair is looking beneath these superimpositions in order to uncover their hidden meaning. This idea brings us again to the problem of whether Sinclair is reading or writing the city, whether he is reading, interpreting, uncovering a web of spatial meanings or he is building the city as a text, encoding space with layers of superimpositions. This issue suggests that Sinclair represents London as a layered text using spatial and temporal coordinates. Peter Barry has pointed out that Sinclair is ‘acutely aware of the city as a palimpsest, a document constantly.

over-written, not just by successive eras of history and development, but also by natural and geographical forces.\textsuperscript{118} Sinclair is not only aware of the city as a palimpsest but actually creates this palimpsest through his representation of the city.

Another example of Sinclair's reading of the city as a palimpsest is manifest in the idea that the churches, due to their mysterious power, have drawn the outlaw to their shadows: 'The East London churches still draw the meths-men and derelicts, fire-alcohol devotees, to the attendant parks....The churches not altogether benevolent, but seducing these terminal optimists into some tall parental grasp' (\textit{LHSB}, 20). Sinclair suggests here that there is something that draws people to the shadows of the churchyards. This thing is hidden. But Sinclair offers possibilities as to why people come to the mysterious corners of the churchyard. This idea is the subject-matter of Philip Larkin's poem 'Church Going' in which he describes a cyclist arriving at a church and lacking the knowledge of how to behave in a church. The speaker meditates on the occult use of churches when they cannot bring out faith in churchgoers: 'When churches fall completely out of use/ What shall we turn them into'. The speaker then ponders on whether these churches will become the haunt of witches: 'Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?/ Or, after dark, will dubious women come/ To make their children touch a particular stone;'.\textsuperscript{119} In this poem, Larkin suggests that Christian belief dissolves into the ghostly presence of museums, or into recycled symbolic objects. Despite the loss of religious faith, Larkin shares with Sinclair the idea that there remains a mystique that still draws people to the shadows of churchyards.

Sinclair's reading of the occult power that surrounds the churches is layered. Upon the first reading he superimposes another:

\textsuperscript{118}Peter Barry, \textit{Contemporary British Poetry and the City} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 165.

There is a further reading to the vagrant invasions of these vestry-protected lands – that they have come to consult the oracle that can no longer be discovered, made their cross-country journeys by well-worn migration tracks, to extinguish ego in the bladed flames; that they have been prematurely released, by catastrophe and shock, from the incubation cubicles beneath the church – half resolved dream victims, have cured – they babble of the vision which they carry as identity. *LHSB, 21*

This passage reveals that those who drift near the churches are looking for the forgotten traces of the victims who were killed in the past. Sinclair imagines the heat of the victims’ bodies released from the compartments that lie beneath the church. The passage presents Sinclair’s reading as an act of writing in which the act of interpreting becomes a process of superimposing and creating layers of meaning.

Sinclair’s treatment of the churches suggests the continuity of history. It is as if the murders that occurred in the past are replayed, casting a long shadow on our era. For example, the Ratcliffe Highway slaughter of 1811 and the death of Mr Abraham Cohen in 1974 are connected: ‘the battering to death of Mr Abraham Cohen...three ritualistic coins laid at his feet, as they were in 1888 at the feet of Mary Ann Nicholls, the first Ripper victim’ *(LHSB, 21).* Sinclair writes that the murder myth is continued: ‘If Christ Church was magnet to the archetypal murder myth of the late 19th century, St George-in-the-East was host to the definitive fear-prose of the early century’ *(LHSB, 22).* The ‘fear-prose’ refers to De Quincey’s *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* which describes the Ratcliffe Highway murders. Sinclair depends in his interpretation of the churches and the mythical patterns they reveal on various literary texts. He superimposes other texts that deal with murder myth and ritual. After quoting De Quincey, for instance, Sinclair shifts in time to the year 1812 when Blake was writing *Jerusalem* from which Sinclair takes further evidence of the idea of murder and death. He then shifts again in time to the year 1974 when he was working as a gardener near Hawksmoor’s churches. He remembers
an apocalyptic dream of darkness, terror, and occult forces and talks about walking near St Anne’s church and discovering a white stone pyramid (LHSB, 27).

Sinclair then reveals London as a historical and geographical palimpsest when he suggests that underlying the contemporary city is a necropolis of the dead: ‘Christ Church rises out of Spitalfields, which was excavated in 1574 when the brick-fields, from which Brick Lane gets its name, were being dug. Bone masses were then discovered; cartloads. Ashes. Powder. Skulls. Stone coffins’ (LHSB, 27). Sinclair relates the idea of the city as a necropolis to other Hawksmoor’s churches such as St George. The idea that the locations of the churches were burial sites is an attempt to explain the mysterious power which the churches still possess. It is as if Sinclair is suggesting that the churches derive this mysterious power from the ancient cults that were performed near them: ‘And I connect the present churches to this mood. Relate them to the four Egyptian protector-goddesses, guardians of the canopic jars. I associate the churches with rites of autopsy on a more than local scale’ (LHSB, 28). The churches are represented by Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols. Sinclair quotes from a lecture by the Egyptologist P. Clayton – that a fragment of a jug that was dedicated to Isis had been found near the Thames and not far from St Anne – in order to give credence to his imaginative account of the churches as temples or ‘cult-centres’. Sinclair convincingly argues that the churches had occupied spiritual and religious sites. The purpose of this speculation is to reveal that there is an inescapable and inexplicable power transference from these ancient places to Hawksmoor’s churches and to the modern geography of London:

We are pushed towards the notion of these churches as Temples; as cult-centres. Courts and gardens where the living communicate with the dead and receive wisdom from them. St Anne seems to connect closely with the ‘Mortuary House’ which C. E. Joel writes of in ‘Megalith into Pyramid’. (LHSB, 28)
Here Sinclair imagines St Anne as a spiritual site, fulfilling C.E. Joel’s description of the buildings on the bank of the Nile which bear a reference to the modern geography of Hawksmoor’s churches. Sinclair reveals the nature of the psychic power that underlies the churches, suggesting that the churches and their geography are not random, but are built according to some mysterious Egyptian model: ‘The steps of the church lend themselves to the mathematics of Osiris: the Nine’ (*LHSB*, 30). In Egyptian mythology, Osiris is the god of life, death, and fertility. Sinclair in this example mythologizes the church and endows it with the supernatural dark forces of Osiris: ‘St Anne is again the truest fulfilment of the Egyptian prototype’ (*LHSB*, 33). Superimposing a quote from G.R. Levy’s *The Tombs of the Giants* upon that taken from C.E. Joel, Sinclair suggests that the relation between Hawksmoor’s churches and Egypt is not a ‘culture-transfer theory’ but a ‘sap connection’ which means that there is some mysterious power that is still active.

Sinclair’s theory of the continuity of history, that the events that occurred are replayed, is manifest in the way he links Hawksmoor churches with the Blitz:

> St Anne was gutted by fire on the morning of Good Friday, April 6, 1850....Can we connect into the same grid of influence the incendiary insects that fell on London in the 1939-45 war – the nights of firemen zoned in on these targets? And, interestingly, Cleopatra’s Needle was scarred during the first ever raid on London by a German Aeroplane, a few minutes before midnight, 1917. (*LHSB*, 38)

Here the Great Fire that destroyed St Anne is linked with both the Blitz of the Second World War and the bombs that fell on St George in the First World War. He describes the bombs that fell on London during the Blitz as ‘incendiary insects’. Here ‘insects’ implies a negative image since the word refers to a Biblical plague. This example reveals that the historical events of the past are replayed and that history repeats itself. Time plays a significant role in Sinclair’s vision
of urban space. This idea implies that we are unremittingly being haunted by the past which reasserts itself through historical events. Sinclair creates a pattern out of his literary imagination of the churches, a pattern of superimpositions in which one event uncovers other events.

The pattern of triangles which reveals the occult power of the churches and helps Sinclair construct a mythology of place parallels that used by Stan Brakhage in his film *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1974). In *Lud Heat* particularly in ‘Rites of Autopsy’, Sinclair uses Brakhage’s film to describe his vision of the city. The fearful and shocking experience of uncovering the autopsy parallels Sinclair’s uncovering of the city through locomotion: ‘We move down into the very heart of the city labyrinth, breaking the first seal’ (*LHSB*, 54). The city is laid on the table of the land like the autopsy in the film: ‘He [Brakhage] had intended to cut a strata down through the city, following on a notion of Ed Dorn’s: City Hall, Hospital, Football, Gangsters’ (*LHSB*, 56). The autopsy in the film stands as a metaphor for the city itself. Linking the autopsy with the Egyptian rites of death which the first section of the poem explores, Sinclair suggests that Brakhage’s ‘vision of the city uncovers a tradition that survives, in corrupted form: as death itself has been corrupted’ (*LHSB*, 58). The link between Sinclair’s pattern of spatial connections which he uses to uncover the mystery of the churches and the pattern used by Brakhage in his film suggests Sinclair’s skill of uniting a collage of material.

In the section ‘From Camberwell to Golgotha’, Sinclair links the pattern used by the poet and sculptor Brian Catling with that of Brakhage. He offers his own reading of Brian Catling’s sculpture double-chamber which was presented at the Royal College of Art in 1974. He reads the line-drawings on the wall of Catling’s room as ‘dedications to the necessary gods’ and that ‘the contours have been borrowed from Upper Egypt’ (*LHSB*, 78). Catling’s chamber whose floor is of ‘three-dimensional shapes’ reminds Sinclair of ‘the tower flute that we meet again at St Anne,
Limehouse' (LHSB, 79). Sinclair implies, through the patterns used by Hawksmoor, Brakhage, and Catling, that they all derive their patterns from an Egyptian source matter. In other words, Hawksmoor’s pyramids, Brakhage’s autopsy and the idea of energy released from death and killing, and Catling’s ‘discover[y] [of] what is “Egypt” in himself’ (LHSB, 78) refer to Egyptian mythology and culture.

Sinclair mythologizes London by linking the occult practice of the 1970s’ writers with Egyptian mythology and culture. But why does Sinclair mythologize London? The hypothesis that underlying contemporary London is a web of occult forces can be read as a response to some dominating power beyond the individual’s control. Allen Fisher observes that in Lud Heat ‘[t]here are subtle mechanisms at work subjugating our psyches, trying to keep and often succeeding to keep, our senses, awarenesses at a lower level than they need be in view of the social and economical potential of our situation’ (Fisher, 152). Fisher suggests that there is a kind of power that prevents us from interacting with the social and economic systems. This idea brings us to Henri Lefebvre’s theory of space, which postulates that urban space is determined by economical, social, and political forces. Lefebvre argues that the relationships between force (or energy), time, and space are problematical simply because they cannot be grasped in themselves by intellectual analysis.\(^\text{120}\) In Lud Heat, Sinclair is interested in uncovering the social and economic forces that are active in urban space and endeavours to explore these abstract notions of time, space, and energy and their complex relationships. Lefebvre’s materialism can be contrasted with Sinclair’s occultism. Sinclair’s theory of occult power lurking beneath the everyday life of the city registers a tendency to reveal the reality of contemporary London. In this sense, Sinclair appears to be revising Lefebvre’s idea that in order ‘[t]o deal with real space, architecture and texts relating to architecture would be a better choice than literary texts proper’

(Lefebvre, 15). While Lefebvre is interested in architecture and texts relating to architecture (that is with real space), Sinclair deals with an imagined occult space. The first section of Lud Heat, ‘Nicholas Hawksmoor, His Churches’, engages with Hawksmoor’s churches and their architectural design in an imaginative way.

Sinclair’s occult reading of London churches brings him to investigate the social, economic and political problems of the city. He sees the city undergoing urban decline brought by the corrupt political, economical, and social ideologies of Thatcher. He once remarked:

You can’t understand Thatcher except in terms of bad magic. This wicked witch who focuses all the ill will in society. I can’t understand her except as demonically possessed by the evil forces of world politics. Everything else follows from that: oil revenues blown in dubious arms deals, all real values trashed. She becomes a godhead to those who want to destroy the city’s power. But the godhead is created for a system which destroys her, as always happens. Now she’s been banished to a kingdom of whisky and mockery. But the fact remains that she introduced occultism into British politics and that the role of the writer was to counter that political culture. (Jeffries, The Guardian, April 24, 2004)

Lud Heat reveals the potential of the imagination as a defence strategy that stands in opposition to Thatcher’s political system. In Downriver (1991), Sinclair sees that our lack of imagination gave rise to Thatcher: ‘The Widow is the focus of our own lack of imagination; the robot of our greed and ignorance. Therefore, she is indestructible’.\textsuperscript{121} In both works, Sinclair presents a negative image of Thatcher, revealing that it is ‘our lack of imagination’ that has unleashed Thatcher’s political power. Sinclair adds a new image of Thatcher—that of the witch—in order to suggest that Thatcher’s political practice was not totally comprehensible. There are hidden forces that are unacknowledged. It is as if Sinclair is suggesting that the occult symbolises Thatcher’s rapid and unpredictable policies. What Sinclair is possibly suggesting is that no one predicted, for example, Thatcher’s ideologies of deregulation and privatisation during the 1980s

and that she has unleashed unacknowledged predominant social and economic forces. Sinclair suggests that the British economy was in the hands of secret, dubious dealers and that during the era of Thatcher there were hidden political objectives unknown to society at large. Sinclair’s remark on the unacknowledged oil revenues possibly refers to Thatcher’s blind allegiance to American politics. Thatcher’s critics often focus on her dubious relation with the United States government whose interference in British politics has brought negative consequences. Sinclair’s mapping of the occult forces that are still active in the city can be read as an attempt to reveal Thatcher’s political, economic, and social machinations and to counter the political culture that emerged in her time. Thus Sinclair’s revival of occult themes in contemporary London suggests that the occult characterises not only Hawksmoor’s work and Egyptian mythology but also the political scene of contemporary London.

ii. *Lights Out for the Territory* and the City as a Text:

In this section of the chapter I will argue that in *Lights Out* walking does not convert the city into a legible text; walking encodes rather than decodes the text. This idea contrasts with walking as a means of revealing and exploring the city. Sinclair revises the concept of walking throughout *Lights Out*. He starts with the notion of walking as a means of revelation and disclosure but finds himself endorsing the idea that the city resists readability.

While Sinclair focuses in *Lud Heat* on imagining the occult forces that are hidden but active in the city, in *Lights Out for the Territory* (1997) he reveals the reality of the city through walking. Walking the city’s streets and its dark alleys is an attempt to come to terms with the city and to comprehend its physical, social, and cultural fabric. Sinclair starts his project by walking
London in the shape of the letter v, a notion he developed from his novel *Radon Daughters* where 'the physical movements of the characters across their territory might spell out the letters of a secret alphabet.' In a sense, then, walking is a means of revelation. The city is imagined as a text, written by the movement of the *flâneur* or the urban walker. In *Lights Out* Sinclair presents a new conception of the *flâneur*. He revises the concept of the nineteenth-century *flâneur* who roams the streets of the city aimlessly:

The concept of the "strolling", aimless urban wandering, the *flâneur*, has been superseded. We had moved into the age of the stalker; journeys made with intent – sharp-eyed and unsponsored. The stalker was our role model: purposed hiking, not dawdling, nor browsing....The stalker is a stroller who sweats, a stroller who knows where he is going, but not why or how. (*LOT*, 75)

For Sinclair, the new *flâneur* is not an aimless wanderer but someone who is self-conscious and drifts with a purpose. The nineteenth-century *flâneur* walks the city for leisure but the new *flâneur* (Sinclair and Atkins) has the purpose of uncovering the secret history of the city. This *flâneur* can be equated with the detective who is able to reveal the logic beneath the city’s text:

Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city; the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode. Tramping asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to assert itself. To the no-bullshit materialist this sounds suspiciously like fin-de-siècle decadence, a poetic of entropy—but the born again *flâneur* is a stubborn creature, less interested in texture and fabric, eavesdropping on philosophical conversation pieces, than in noticing *everything*. (*LOT*, 4)

The *flâneur* here is a product of the modern city. Sinclair suggests that walking is the best way to explore the city and that it brings the walker in contact with culture and urban life. The idea that the *flâneur*'s walk will reveal an underlying, invisible pattern links interestingly with the

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uncovering of the pattern of Hawksmoor’s churches in *Lud Heat*. What stands out strongly in the passage above is the idea of the dérive (translated as drift) which is derived from Guy Debord and the Situationist International. The dérive or drift is a psychogeographic practice aimed at reconfiguring the city by registering the various ambiances in cityscapes. For Sinclair, walking the city is a psychogeographic experience of space where the walker is attentive to situations and their minute details. The new flâneur does not focus on the street level but on what lurks beneath the surface. For Sinclair, the walker does not notice everything because he has a clear objective. In this sense, the act of walking provides a new perspective from which the city is perceived. For Sinclair walking is an act of reading what is hidden. Walking, then, reveals the city not as a text but as a particular kind of text.

Arguably, Sinclair’s textual representation of the city and the new concept of the flâneur fall within the debate on urban discourse. According to the French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, walking undermines a totalised view of the city. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau asserts that looking at the city from the 103rd floor of World Trade Centre gives the observer a totalised vision of Manhattan:

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below’, below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it.\(^\text{123}\)

De Certeau clearly distinguishes two opposing views of the city. The first engages with observing the city as a concept while the second emphasises walking as an experience. Looking at the city from above, which suggests seeing the city like a map, is an attempt to make the space of the city legible by the totalising eye. But this legibility, de Certeau argues, is mainly visual

and therefore it contrasts with the true nature of space as it is lived. De Certeau imagines the city as a text produced repeatedly by the walkers. This text is not legible by the walkers because they write it. They are part of it. So the city can be seen as a text but it is not a decipherable text when perceived from the street level. For de Certeau, thus, walking is a spatial practice that does not render the city readable. This representation of the city in terms of textuality is one way of comprehending the conceptual and visual complexity of the city. In his essay ‘The Flâneur: Literature, History and Urban Theory’, Mark Rawlinson argues that the concept of the flâneur is problematic when he is thought of as ‘an analogue for ways of seeing or ways of navigating city space, or when the flâneur concept is identified exclusively with either vision or locomotion.’

Arguably, Sinclair revises this concept of the flâneur as an observer and walker by suggesting that the flâneur is not interested in reading the city’s surface text but in revealing what lies beneath the visual field. That is, for Sinclair, the flâneur will make the city readable by uncovering the logic beneath its surface. So Sinclair revises the nineteenth-century Baudelairean flâneur who roams the streets of Paris for leisure and who can be one of ‘the ordinary practitioners of the city’, to use de Certeau’s phrase. Sinclair, then, attributes to the flâneur a perception that is denied to others. Whilst de Certeau views the city as illegible at street level, Sinclair suggests that walking the city will make the invisible legible through hard perception or by looking beneath the surface. Sinclair’s flâneur is not therefore an ordinary observer. He is different, for example, from either the observer or the observed man in Edgar Allan Poe’s story ‘The Man of the Crowd’ (1850) (both of which can be regarded as flâneurs since they both walk and observe the city). Walter Benjamin’s reading of Baudelaire’s reading of Poe’s story raises the question of who can be designated a flâneur in the story. Should the flâneur be an observer or

an observed? In ‘The Flâneur: Literature, History and Urban Theory’, Rawlinson argues that the flâneur should be considered both an observer and an observed. The idea that the flâneur is a particular observer registers Sinclair’s way of bridging the gap between the flâneur as a subject (i.e. an observer or walker) and object (a product of the city). Lights Out presents the flâneur both as an observer and observed. Sinclair walks the city in terms of the letter v but he later finds it necessary to step outside this text which he composed through walking in order to read the word VOX. In a way, Sinclair uses flâneurie to provide a particular perspective on London, a perspective that reveals the city as a legible text.

De Certeau’s theory of urban walking can be compared with Kevin Lynch’s imagining of the city as a text which is introduced in his book The Image of the City (1960). Like de Certeau, Lynch is concerned with how the city can be perceived by the totalizing eye. Like the ‘printed page...[which] can be visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols...a legible city [has] ...districts or landmarks or pathways [that] are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an over-all pattern’ (Lynch, 3). Lynch’s terms are useful for an analysis of the city’s structure. The idea of legible versus illegible texts is marked by Sinclair’s way of examining London as a map, describing its districts, streets, and landmarks with great particularity. Mapping the city involves a totalised vision in order to grasp and articulate urban space; that is, looking at the city, in Lynch’s terms, as a printed page, trying to make sense of its recognizable symbols and patterns. Sinclair presents London as a palimpsestic text: ‘Do you begin to grasp how truly great a work is London? A veritable textbook we may draw upon in formulating great works of our own! We’ll penetrate its metaphors, lay bare its structure and thus come at last upon its meaning’ (LOT, 145). London, looked at as a text, becomes a work of art, hiding its meanings in metaphors. Sinclair intends to uncover the city’s metaphors and symbols. Consequently,
London requires interpretation like a text. The analogy between the city and the text lies in the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations that can be drawn – as William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock point out, ‘like a literary text, the city has as many interpretations as it has readers’.\footnote{William Sharp and Leonard Wallock, ‘From “Great Town” to “Nonplace Urban Realm”: Reading the Modern City’ in William Sharp and Leonard Wallock (eds.), Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art, and Literature (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 17.}

In *Lights Out* Sinclair envisions London as a palimpsest. A good illustration of this is when he comments on the verse on the Sealy tomb in St. Mary’s Church at Lambeth: ‘on closer examination, it can be seen that the ghost of another poem, or earlier version of this one, is hidden beneath; the letters filled in and partially obliterated’ (*LOT*, 189). In this example there is an underlying text struggling to reveal itself. Sinclair endeavours to read the writing beneath the original text, to see the text under the *other* text and to underline what is missing. Sinclair is concerned with articulating the city’s hidden text. To reveal London’s subterranean world, Sinclair has to go beyond the visible. It is as if he is unmasking the city, stripping off its surface layer to reveal its hidden reality. This reading can be contrasted with another passage in which a girl: ‘tears the pages relevant to her day’s excursion out of the A-Z, throwing them away as she advances into fresh territory. The serial city is a manageable concept. She’s in control, never tempted to go back to where she has been before’ (*LOT*, 44). This quotation indicates that the girl destroys the past, deconstructing the palimpsest, and freeing herself from the text by showing less dependence on it.

The image of the city as a text is created in the mind of the observer. Walking, then, is contrasted with memory. In light of this, we can suggest that there is a tension between walking and remembering. At the beginning of *Lights Out*, it is the movement of the characters across their territory which may write and reveal the city’s text, while in the final excursion the city’s text is the act of remembering that we have been in that territory before (a kind of a Déjà Vu).
Thus, we can conclude that the city’s text shifts from geographical and urban space to the observer’s mind and memory. This contrasts with the idea of fusion between space and psyche, city and inhabitant, outside and inside. In Sinclair’s writing, space and time are interrelated. In *Lights Out*, the Thames, for instance, is seen as dividing the city into two but at the same time connecting the present with the past:

The river moves through time, obsessively painted and sketched, shifts of light captured, so that it retains its special status as a ribbon of memory: a journey through a collection of these images becomes the best way of travelling back, discovering what we have done to ourselves (*LOT*, 173).

The Thames has a role in reviving our memory of the past. This idea can be compared with the Thames in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* where the Thames reminds the speaker of Spenser’s line ‘Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song’ and Conrad’s opening of *Heart of Darkness* (as Eliot acknowledged) in which the speaker narrates his story in a boat on the Thames. In both Eliot and Sinclair, the Thames brings in the fragments of past memories. Eliot suggests in ‘The Fire Sermon’, that ‘The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, / silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends/ or other testimony of summer nights’ (*CPP*, 67). Eliot suggests that the Thames washes away any traces of human existence, while Sinclair suggests that the river reflects our experiences and memories. Place and individual are interrelated as the river enters our imaginative realm. Imagining the city, for Sinclair, becomes an act of self-discovery, a psychogeographic journey into the past.

Looking at the city as a text, as a system of signs decoded by the movement of the *flâneur* suggests Sinclair’s way of bridging the gap between imagining the city and coming to terms with its urban texture and quotidian particularities. Walking reveals a reciprocal relation between subject and object, man and his social milieu. In ‘Skating on Thin Eyes: the First Walk’,
Sinclair states that: ‘[t]he notion was to cut a crude v into the sprawl of the city, to vandalise dormant energies by an act of ambulant signmaking’ (LOT, 1). The notion of cutting a crude v reveals Sinclair performing a kind of autopsy on the city. It is as if the city demands a particular walking and reading. Sinclair envisions the city as an energy field where the walker finds it necessary to break this sealed system by making signs and symbols. A good example of this is when the v of the walk becomes a triangle: ‘The v of our walk is no longer an open-ended proposition. The v is sealed. It has become a triangle’ (LOT, 35). The transformation of the letter v into a triangle implies that the city has become an encoded text with multiple meanings. This supports the idea that the meaning of the text does not lie on the surface but in the numerous meanings of its signs and symbols. The meaning of the triangular sign remains ambivalent in the text. It could mean a geometric or an occult sign.

Throughout his perambulations, Sinclair reads the city as a text. He constructs a dialogue with the city by reading urban graffiti:

Graffiti is the only constant on these frantic journeys; random codices, part sign and part language. Recording as many of these fractured compositions as we could find along a given route from Hackney to Greenwich to Chingford would be like editing an unpredictable anthology’ (LOT, 4).

Sinclair imagines the city as an anthology of graffiti inscribed by its inhabitants. Reading graffiti is like editing the book of the city. Sinclair appears to intervene in this editing. Seeing the city as an encyclopaedia of infinite texts reveals a tension in Sinclair’s writing: on the one hand editing suggests a return to the original text without thinking about insertions or modifications; on the other, editing requires the editor to make changes to the original. Sinclair’s decoding of graffiti is an attempt to comprehend the social and cultural reality of the city. For example, Sinclair states that the EOKA sign written on the wall at first made no sense. He believes that the sign is a
political Turkish slogan: ‘I had to copy the EOKA glyph into my notebook, so that I could have it analysed by someone more knowledgeable in the subtleties of Turkish splinter group politics (LOT, 13). However, ‘looking more closely at the letters’, Sinclair writes, ‘I realised that I had got it all wrong, TOKI’. Here Sinclair is editing the text of the city, unravelling its multiple meanings and interpretations. He uncovers a reading of the glyph but this reading is also an act of rewriting. This example reveals that the city is readable only at a certain level and therefore requires a particular reading.

Sinclair’s walking creates the city as a text. As Sinclair states, each excursion in Lights Out is an embodiment of a letter of the alphabet and this is an example of viewing the city as a text, of articulating its hidden word:

I wait outside, toying with the notion that each essay so far written for this book can be assigned one letter of the alphabet. Obviously, the first two pieces go together, the journey from Abney Park to Chingford Mount: V. The circling of the City: an oval O. The history of Vale Royal, its poet and publisher: an X on the map. VOX. The unheard voice that is always present in the darkness. (LOT, 159)

Here Sinclair steps outside the text in order to read it. That is, walking the city according to specific letters is an act of writing it. Reading the city as a text requires a perspective from outside the text in order to spell the word ‘VOX’ (i.e. voice). Walking reveals the word ‘VOX’ and this supports de Certeau’s idea of walking as a speech act (de Certeau, 97). For de Certeau, walking is a metaphor for enunciation. It allows the walker to construct a dialogue with the city. Arguably, in Lud Heat, the same word (i.e. VOX) is created by the buildings: ‘The buildings taken together, knotted across the city, yield a further word’ (LHSB, 7). This suggests that there is a discourse in space waiting to be uncovered; there is language under the city’s surface. Quoting Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre writes: ‘[t]he space of the city is said to embody a
discourse, a language’ (Lefebvre, 142). The hidden word that Sinclair spells suggests that he constructs a dialogue with the city, eavesdropping for hidden voices, and reading and interpreting vague signatures.

However, Sinclair’s walks reveal the problem that the city violates the walker’s expectations. For example, walking the city in the shape of a letter v does not yield revelation because the v of the walk turns into a triangular sign signifying various meanings. In this sense, language, the medium by which we read and come to know the city, becomes a barrier that prevents us from apprehending the city as a material object. Reading urban graffiti, Sinclair suggests that the city resists deciphering: ‘We’re trapped in an isthmus of signs, not language’ (LOT, 41). As a result, Sinclair resorts to offering interpretations of these signs, representing the city from multiple perspectives. At times he obliterates all distances so that he can read urban graffiti and retrieve some of the invisible messages on the walls. At other times he looks at the city from a distance to get a totalised vision: ‘The City is termite territory: thousands of head-down workers serving an unacknowledged queen, a fear motor buried deep in the heart of the place’ (LOT, 89). Two lines later Sinclair identifies the queen as Margaret Thatcher: ‘She made it all right: greed was good, work was holy, the clouds were frivolous nonsense. There was no such thing as society, no time beyond or behind the present – no cosmology, but the great darkness, the worship of her achievements.’ Sinclair links the image of London workers who walk over London Bridge in Eliot’s The Waste Land with the social life of London during the era of Thatcher. That is, he projects the London of Thatcher onto Eliot’s ‘unreal city’. The above quote points to Sinclair’s critique of Thatcher’s political impact, of her policies that had negative repercussions on social, economic, and urban life. She is viewed as a witch, keeping society and social life under her spell.
Sinclair then reveals that the problem is not with the individual or with walking but with the city itself. In his essay ‘The Hauntological Example’, Julian Wolfreys explores this problem with the following argument: ‘To understand the city is to understand its being haunted, its being-spectral. The city’s identity is thus always already disturbed from within by some other, haunting trace.’ This haunting trace appears when Sinclair projects his London onto Eliot’s. Sinclair’s London becomes Eliot’s London. Both Eliot and Sinclair reflect London in terms of social life and people’s behaviour in the financial district of London. Eliot depicts the workers heading to their offices as if walking in Dante’s inferno. Sinclair implies that Thatcher has transformed London’s financial district into a Dantesque inferno. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is not the only text that haunts Sinclair’s vision of London. Blake’s vision of the New Jerusalem is also superimposed on the text. Sinclair compares his London with Blake’s vision of the New Jerusalem over London: ‘Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Moorgate, Aldersgate, Cripplegate, Newgate, Ludgate, Billingsgate, with the tower, Barbican, and Castle Baynard: eleven wounds in the electrical circuits....The city as is proper, is one gate short of holy Jerusalem, of symmetry’ (*LOT*, 102). Blake’s New Jerusalem forms one layer of Sinclair’s London where ‘[t]he meaning of the gates has been carried away with the brickwork’ (*LOT*, 102). This meaning remains a constantly haunting object. Sinclair is interested in retrieving missing meanings. In the excursion ‘House in the Park’, Sinclair is aware of what is left from the vanished house, and as Wolfreys argues, what is left is the ghost of the place that keeps haunting Sinclair’s memory (Wolfreys, 1998, 140). This idea suggests that the concept of hauntology problematizes a fixed view of the city. London is formed anew through each encounter. As Julian Wolfreys points out, throughout *Lights Out* Sinclair presents not only a London but ‘a series of Londons’ (Wolfreys, 1998, 144).

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The flexibility of envisioning London—of looking at the city from different angles and of connecting past and present visions of London—depicts Sinclair’s technique of treating the city realistically and pragmatically. Sinclair endeavours to rationalise his approach to London by referring to how the city is imagined in other literary texts. The problem which Sinclair locates in London, however, is that there is a gap between imagining and walking the city. In the beginning of *Lights Out*, Sinclair states that walking is the best way to explore the city. He reveals later the reality of London as a labyrinth where the walker is left ‘hungry for the clues that would allow him to reorientate himself’ (*LOT*, 24). Sinclair realises the experiential complexity of walking the city which poses a problem for the inhabitant who always searches for ways to come to terms with the city’s protean nature: ‘The new City has exploited images of terror, wrecked buildings, newsreel carnage routines, as an explanation of its desire to seal itself off, to put physical barriers at all the ports of entrance’ (*LOT*, 90). Here Sinclair refers to the financial district of London and the new City is a symbol of Thatcher’s London in the 1980s. This new London is presented as an autonomous entity, refusing to yield to the observer’s demands. ‘The new City’ is imagined as a prison sealing itself off and practising its killing routines. Sinclair refers to the inhabitants’ inability to come to terms with the city. This conception of the changing identity of the city implies that we need to revise the ways through which the city is understood and perceived. Walking the city for Sinclair means encountering its dark reality and coming down to its quotidian level. He realises that he has to *tune* himself to the city’s reality. Sinclair suggests that the city demands a certain power in order to cope with it. The idea that London seals itself off suggests that it has become like a machine. Sinclair celebrates the way Gavin Jones and Brian Catling responded to the city and tuned themselves to its changing reality through their psychic power. Through this shamanic power, Gavin Jones recreates London as a powerful machine:
'Jones' tolerated sub-tenant established a museum of memory from which another London, disturbed and demented, could be reassembled. A city of articulate engines and aboriginal robots' (*LOT*, 246). London is viewed as a secret machine, hiding patterns of energy:

> We’ve gazed down on the prospects of the City from so many church towers, it’s almost as if we have flown like Bladud in an arrogance of vanity and delusion; *as if seeing a pattern was creating one*. As if walks linking discrete sites could manifest some miraculous whole, compete with gears and bearings of the secret machine (*LOT*, 127) (my italics).

This passage illustrates that Sinclair’s linking of the sites (through observation and locomotion) competes with the city as a secret machine. The idea that seeing a pattern is conducive to creating one links with *Lud Heat* in which reading the pattern of Hawksmoor’s churches becomes an act of writing it. Sinclair does not reveal whether he is uncovering Hawksmoor’s pattern or creating it (or both). Through Gavin Jones, Sinclair asserts the way art becomes part of our mental life: ‘Viewing this art, we become part of it. We could feel the lick of metal coating our lungs. We began to accept the Jones thesis: there is no borderline between maker and made....Whatever Jones noticed or touched became a part of him’ (*LOT*, 251). Transcending the border between object and subject can be read as a way of coming to terms with the city.

Similarly, Sinclair suggests that the poet Brian Catling, who he claims has a particular sense of location, possesses a mysterious power of performance. Catling was ‘a master of strategy, exploiting faults and flaws until they become strengths...[he] emerged from the Thatcher years in a position of fluent power’ (*LOT*, 251). Through Gavin Jones and Brian Catling, Sinclair suggests that the city demands redefinition. He writes that Catling has found ‘a new formula for his work: iteration, transformation, erasure...It was not that he relied on metaphor for his effects—but that the boundaries were down; artist, place, objects, were in flux,
exchanging identities’ (LOT, 254). This fusion between place, artist, and object lies at the core of the psychogeographic experience and the reciprocity between the individual and place. The city becomes the observer’s brain: ‘The City is revealed like a naked brain, uncapped so that all its pulsing cells are offered for exploitation. The churches are needles, driven into the clay to bend the flow of current’ (LOT, 129). Here Sinclair suggests that the city demands a kind of autopsy to uncover its secrets.

Thus walking reveals the problem of the city (that the city defies interpretation): ‘Repeated walks, circuits, attempts to navigate – to get to the heart of the labyrinth – proved frustrating. There was no centre….We hit every church, recording armadas of stone vessels. And all without the desired shock of revelation. The City resisted us’ (LOT, 106). That the city is discovered to be without a centre emphasises that it is illegible. London defies the walker’s expectations. Jonathan Raban observes that the city’s resistance to human expectations is natural when we try to impose a certain shape on them: ‘Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try and impose a personal form on them.’

127 Imagining the city as a text does not decode the city nor the text. Sinclair emphasises that London poses a problem because it is not always comprehensible. Bernard Tschumi asks an important question: ‘How to assert the character of a city at the very point where it negates itself?’

128 Sinclair is trying to come to terms with the city when it negates itself by its resistance to being shaped and formulated. He discovers that the city has an artistic autonomy: ‘The City is at last able to compose its own poetry, with no human intervention’ (LOT, 91). Consequently, the attempt to write the city is in conflict with the city’s autonomous power to write itself. Sinclair underlines this new frustrating urban experience.

It is frustrating because the poet is usurped or demoted. In another excursion, Sinclair stresses this idea again:

London, a lacuna at its centre, is a termite concourse for passengers in transit. The only cinema appropriate to its spiritual aridity is a cinema of surveillance. Let the city shoot its own suicide: unedited, mute, a procession of silent traffic, headlights like torches. If you are noticed, you will be eliminated. This is a cinema that has outgrown its audience (LOT, 309).

The purpose of revealing that the city is without a centre is to emphasise its dynamic and complex nature. The passage reveals Sinclair’s indignation at the intentional hijacking of personal freedom by surveillance cameras. The city’s surveillance cameras relate to Thatcher’s unacknowledged power over social life. London inhabitants are like passengers in transit locked and watched by surveillance cameras. Sinclair underlines London’s physical and spiritual futility. The city is looking at its spiritual aridity through surveillance cameras. These surveillance cameras reveal nothing but the city’s problem. They can be equated with the observer’s eye which does not reveal the city but his own modest perception of it. Sinclair suggests that London remains an unmapped territory. He reveals that it is hollow at the core.

In response to the city’s resistance to being formulated, Sinclair suggests that ‘London is begging to be rewritten’ (LOT, 138). This idea presupposes that the city is already a text inscribed by its inhabitants and haunted and edited by many authors (Blake, Dickens, etc.). The city becomes a recurrently edited book, an encyclopaedia that lacks aesthetic organization and form. London is an encyclopaedia that is not only written, erased and transformed but also rewritten to present new experiences. In his interpretation of urban graffiti, Sinclair underscores that: ‘reproduced words join the rest of the trumpeting exotica in the encyclopaedia of the city’ (LOT, 16). The modern city is perceived as the accumulated experiences of the past. It is an
encyclopaedia of texts. Sinclair’s city is a continuation of various perceptions from the past. As Hana Wirth-Nesher points out, ‘[T]he spaces we have come to believe we know, those we can read, are legible through the mediation of texts about them, through the cumulative perceptions of others.’ Thus, Sinclair’s rewriting of the city reproduces it and regenerates it in a different form because it needs redeeming. The idea that ‘London is begging to be rewritten’ suggests that it is London that dictates its writing. It is the city itself that brings the writer to imagine it in terms of writing or text. For Sinclair, it is London that calls for other ways of perception, and not the writer who finds it necessary to rethink the ways in which the city is imagined. As Julian Wolfreys points out, understanding the city in terms of text or writing is mainly dictated by the city itself. What Wolfreys suggests is that the city has autonomy. It possesses the power to appeal to the writer’s imagination for new ways of perception. The city, in other words, creates its own writing, its own text. The text which the city creates and the text which the writer creates are not in harmony. So Sinclair’s representation of London as dissatisfied with its writing suggests London as an illegible text.

Sinclair’s vision of London draws heavily from the techniques used in photography and cinema. He acknowledges the significance of Marc Atkins’s photographs: ‘Marc’s photographs...informed the text....I would look at key images for a long time before writing’ (LOT, 269). These photos, which record the places that haunt the writer’s memory, instigate various responses. Looking at these photographs evokes various impressions that bring about numerous psychogeographic responses. Related to the idea of photographing and its effects on the walker’s perception of the city is Sinclair’s prolonged writing about cinematic effects. In the excursion ‘Cinema Purgatorio’, London is vividly revealed through the dramatic techniques of

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130 Julian Wolfreys, Writing London: The Trace of the Urban Text from Blake to Dickens, p. 196.
films. Sinclair does not indicate that filming techniques are more reliable than fictional writing but establishes a palpable link between the two. For example, he suggests that the translation of Gerald Kersh's, *Night and the City*, into film was inventive. This translation 'mix[es] psychologically perceptive set design with a notably vivid account of the geography of post-war London' (*LOT*, 307). In *Lights Out*, psychogeography and photography inform each other. The relation between the photographer and the object photographed is analogous to that between the observer and the city. In psychogeography, places leave an ineffaceable imprint on the mind and the effects are recorded on the walker's memory, as if the observer were a moving camera. In photography all the photographic shots are stored as evidence of real places and objects. Sinclair's *Liquid City* (1999), which can be considered an extension of *Lights Out*, explores the relation between literature and photography. In it Atkins's photographs inform and illustrate Sinclair's text. The fact that the book has more photographs than text reveals the importance of the visual material on which Sinclair's method of writing relies heavily.

Sinclair's interest in cinematic technique is evident in his comments on Patrick Keiller's film *London*. Keiller, Sinclair writes, is 'interested in the exploration of architectural space, which is a real difficulty in films without characters as a foreground (the cinema of Antonioni)' (*LOT*, 299). Keiller's way of looking at London is quite remarkable and one that constantly reminds us of Sinclair's method in *Lights Out*: 'Keiller's separate takes (different angles, lenses, distances) on the same subject are a way of articulating space' (*LOT*, 305). Like Keiller, Sinclair aspires to recreate London using outstanding cinematic effects. London is viewed from various angles. From his early occupation as a documentary filmmaker, Sinclair learned to attain precise and accurate perception in creating a multi-dimensional space that enriched his work. This trait brought him close to the realist strain of writing, but Sinclair's realism differs from those who
preceded him in that it is marked by sharp perception and close relation with the places that continually haunt his memory.

These ideas suggest that Sinclair’s literary representation of modern urban life differs from other modernist writers of the early twentieth century. Sinclair and T.S. Eliot can be related in interesting ways. Sinclair represents the metropolis as a literary encyclopedia where layers of the literary past are accumulated through time. Like Eliot, Sinclair is concerned with the city as an imposition of various literary visions. But while Eliot presents the doomed fate of London as inseparable from the fate of other European cities: (Athens, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Vienna), Sinclair localizes London by focusing on its quotidian life and cultural heritage. Eliot expresses the modernist spirit through the fragmented conception of the inhabitant, as is the case in The Waste Land and ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, for instance. In ‘The Love Song’, Prufrock projects his inner psyche onto the city which he walks (or describes). Most of the scenes in ‘The Love Song’ sharply reveal the psychological state and consciousness of the speaker as a sign of modernity. In Eliot’s urban poetry, the city is a reflection of the speaker’s psyche, with a strong emphasis on the psychological, subjective state of the speaker.

Sinclair opposes this modernist reading of the city when he shifts the problem from the individual to the city itself. For Sinclair, the problem does not reside in the way we read the city but in the city itself as an autonomous entity that resists reading and shaping. Sinclair differs from Eliot in that he is a ‘territorial scrutineer’, to use Peter Barry’s phrase. Sinclair once declared:

If I had to write about any city—and I did because of the strong sense of place that I have—it had to be London. I couldn’t do Paris, for example, because there would be too much of a culture of approval for my writing. London seems imponderable, unlike anywhere else. I was drawn in and never really escaped. (Quoted by Jeffries, The Guardian, 24 April, 2004)
Sinclair, unlike Eliot, reveals London as a city unlike any other city. Sinclair suggests here that there are cultural differences that prevent him from writing about other cities. Arguably, Sinclair’s comment on the specificity and meaning of place reminds us of William Carlos Williams:

Place is the only reality, the true core of the universal... We live in one place at a time but far from being bound by it, only through it do we realize our freedom. Place then ceases to be a restriction, we do not have to abandon our familiar and known to achieve distinction but from constricting ourselves, not searching for some release in some particular place, rather in that place, if we only make ourselves sufficiently aware of it, do join with others in other places.  

Williams argues that place does not restrict the poet’s memories from roaming the past. He thinks of place as a basic reality in human existence, but most importantly is the way our awareness and knowledge of place connects us with others. Williams uses place as a strategy to free the human mind, because what restricts the individual is not place itself. Unlike Eliot, both Sinclair and Williams observe that although man and city may reveal each other, the city cannot be represented through the human mind. Williams stresses the triumph of the city over the poetic mind in Paterson. Sinclair then is closer to Williams than Eliot in terms of his conception of place and the literary representation of the city.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to reveal the tension in Sinclair’s textual representation of London in both Lights Out for the Territory and Lud Heat. I have argued that Sinclair’s re-imagining of the city is a textual experience that is conducive to the experiences of the walker who searches for the everyday present signs of the city. Lights Out reveals how the city and the text, reality and imagination, collapse into each other. I have used de Certeau’s and

Kevin Lynch's arguments as a framework within which concepts of legibility versus illegibility can be explored. The presence of legibility versus illegibility in Sinclair's conception of the city possibly means that London is a conglomeration of both. That London is both legible and illegible signifies the power it has over the observer's mind and psyche. Sinclair stresses the fact that it is difficult to imagine London in terms of legibility only, without acknowledging its antithesis. It is as if Sinclair is suggesting that any literary representation of the city is bound to have a tension – this is analogous to the walker who can never fully walk the total city. And it is this celebration of the city as an arena of tensions that keeps surfacing in Sinclair's writing about contemporary London.
CHAPTER FOUR

Mapping a Visionary London: Aidan Andrew Dun’s Vale Royal

This chapter aims to reveal Dun’s conception of the contemporary city and its complex dimensions in Vale Royal. I will trace three lines of argument. The first is concerned with Dun’s use of the romantics as a literary device to reflect on the modern condition of the city and its social, historical, cultural, and literary problems. The second argument investigates the idea that Dun’s rewriting and reviving of the romantics places Vale Royal at the opposite extreme to Eliot’s The Waste Land, revealing Dun’s way of unwriting modernism’s negative view of the city. The third examines Dun’s representation of London in terms of the political forces that shape it, which is one of the central issues in post-war urban discourse. Dun shares with Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, and Michael Moorcock the desire to use London myths and legends as a means to criticise the contemporary city and the political, social problems that emerged during Thatcher’s era. For Dun, London remains a dark and dangerous place due to the clashing forces that shape it, yet it possesses the power to unleash and liberate poetic aspirations through history.

Vale Royal is Aidan Dun’s first published poem. After its publication in 1995, Dun earned the title ‘Poet of Kings Cross’. Born in London and raised for ten years in the West Indies, Aidan Andrew Dun belongs to the visionary tradition of British poets. Though published in 1995, the poem, as the notes make clear, ‘began on top of a squat in the Kings Cross winter of 1973’. The first draft of the poem was written in 1981 and was later revised for publication between 1993 and 1995. ‘Vale Royal’ is a name that describes the valley of the lost Fleet River in Kings
Cross. Written in the form of a quest, the poem embarks on a spiritual journey into this territory by imagining London myths and legends. It revolves around the psychogeography of Kings Cross and reveals the poet’s spiritual vision of the modern city through historical, literary, mythical and cultural allusions. The poem, then, reflects the increasingly obtrusive impact of the metropolis on the human mind.

Much of the vitality of the poem comes from Dun’s creative imagination and his preoccupation with the spirit of place. The poem is divided into two cycles and acknowledges the mythic visions of two romantic poets, William Blake and Thomas Chatterton. In the first cycle Dun re-imagines Blake’s vision of the New Jerusalem over Kings Cross by revealing St Pancras Old Church, which lies at the centre of Kings Cross, in relation to a large body of myths and legends: biblical, cabbalistic, Greek, Hebrew. He imaginatively connects the church with a group of Medieval legends known as ‘the Matter of Britain’. These legends deal with Jesus Christ’s coming to Britain and are also connected with Arthurian legends and the quest for the Holy Grail. In the second cycle, Dun uncovers Chatterton’s mythic imagination and his desire to retrace history. This cycle dramatises Chatterton’s imagining of the mythic cities of the past and his resistance to the machinations of the Masons who represent the material reality that obstructs his creativity.

Charged with historical depth, the poem represents urban space as an energy field in which historical, geographical, and cultural forces continually shape the modern city. Dun’s reading of Kings Cross for its historical, cultural, literary and mythic past is indeed a remarkable project. The relation between the history and geography of the place underlies Dun’s conception of Kings Cross:
The valley of the lost Fleet River in Kings Cross is surrounded by the old hills of London, the high Places. Vale Royal is a geographical vessel, a symbolic container of the quiet mind, a perfect place to realize the vision of oneness. Kings Cross has exerted a magnetic attraction down the centuries. The artists, the poets have made this forgotten place royal with their presence. And they themselves are royal because they are visionaries, in rebellion against the human condition and its suffering. In the poem *Vale Royal* the cosmic lifecycle of the Sunchild, the Mighty Youth, born with a vision and dying an early death, reflects the exiled life and redemption of the artist. Chatterton and Blake play his role in the work’s two movements (*VR*, 95).

This elaborate passage, quoted from the notes that are appended to *Vale Royal*, contextualizes the poem and presents its major theme and plot. The passage refers primarily to Dun’s conception of Kings Cross as a symbol of the mind and his internalization of a lost space. Imagining Kings Cross as ‘a geographical vessel’ suggests the poem’s encyclopaedic scope and the attempt to chronicle the mythical history of Kings Cross. This tendency gestures towards a panoramic vision of London as a melting pot in which various historical, religious, and cultural elements intermingle. The idea that ‘Kings Cross has exerted a magnetic attraction down the centuries’ implies that the place possesses a mystical and mythical power. The link between the eighteenth-century poets, Blake and Chatterton, and the places they inhabit, one of the fundamental themes in *Vale Royal*, underlines Dun’s interest in the two poets and their poetic visionary power. The reciprocal relation between these poets and Kings Cross indicates that there is interplay between energies of the city, its occult patterns, and poetic visions. Dun speculates on why Kings Cross continually inspires the poet’s imagination.

The central question for Dun is: why did Blake imagine the New Jerusalem over Kings Cross? And what does this tell us about Kings Cross? In order to reveal the secret power of Kings Cross, Dun re-imagines Blake and Chatterton. He intends to shed light on the great secret of London and to reveal the mythic cities that once occupied the place such as Tartessus and Troynovant (New Troy), ‘the great forerunner of London on the Thames’ (*VR*, 48). The attempt
to read the city in such terms suggests that London impresses Dun by its myths. It radiantly summons for him the historical past that gives meaning and significance to the site. The problem which Dun identifies, however, is that the place is now ‘forgotten’. This remark provides an important clue to why Dun intends to revive the historical, religious, and literary meanings of Kings Cross. The last section of the chapter will argue that Dun’s revival of the historical past of Kings Cross is at odds with his representation of the political issues of the contemporary city.

**i. Rewriting the Romantics**

This section of the chapter will examine Dun’s rewriting of the romantics in *Vale Royal*. The question of reviving the past brings Dun to investigate the work of other London visionaries before him. In the notes of *Vale Royal*, Dun expresses the belief that the poem *Promontoire* by the French Symbolist poet Rimbaud, who once lived in London, bears an implicit metaphoric reference to Kings Cross in London. He is also convinced that the works of other visionaries such as Shelley, Coleridge, and Yeats bear aspects that refer to Kings Cross. So Dun revives the romantic poets in order to reveal the nature of this mysterious power of Kings Cross. In the first cycle of the poem, Dun focuses on Blake’s vision of the New Jerusalem over Kings Cross while in the second cycle he revives Chatterton’s utopian cities and the attempt to retrace history. For Dun, London is inconceivable and unimaginable without those who imagined it before him. So the poetic visions of Blake and Chatterton become inseparable from Dun’s vision of London. This method places *Vale Royal* within a tradition of poems that seek to master the conceptual complexity of the city through poetic means.
In the introductory section of *Vale Royal* which precedes the first cycle, Dun acknowledges Blake’s ‘Golden Quatrain’ and the significance of reconceptualising Blake’s prophetic vision which gives meaning to the poetic conception of the place. Dun clearly states that his purpose in *Vale Royal* is to throw light on the great secret of London by revisiting these romantic urban visions. He intends to compose ‘[a] song to explain the Golden Quatrain/ and the mystical geography of Kings Cross,’ (*VR*, 11). Dun’s note to the ‘Golden Quatrain’ is revealing. It sheds light on how Dun will explain Blake’s prophetic vision. As such, it is worth quoting in full:

Blake’s prophetic riddle which points to Kings Cross as central to the New Jerusalem.
The Fields from Islington to Marybone
To Primrose Hill and St John’s Wood
Were buildeed over with pillars of gold
And there Jerusalem’s pillars stood.
These four lines demarcate a geographical rectangle, with the Euston road to the south forming its base, the line from Marylebone to Primrose Hill as its western side. St Pancras Old Church lies at the centre of this rectangle (*VR*, 95).

The lines above reveal Blake as a psychogeographer whose mapping of Kings Cross imaginatively and creatively connects with his prophetic vision of the New Jerusalem, the utopian city of the mind. Blake’s ‘Golden Quatrain’ reveals Kings Cross as a palimpsest where a poetic and visionary New Jerusalem forms another layer. Dun, in this sense, is re-reading Blake as one of the lost voices of metropolitan history.

*Zooming in on Blake’s geographical rectangle, Dun constructs a map of Kings Cross out of Blake’s lines from his epic *Jerusalem*. The word ‘riddle’ in the above-quoted passage implies the technique of estrangement. That is, Dun rewrites Blake by estranging this geographical map, thus endowing it with an air of mystery. Revealing Kings Cross as a palimpsest and making Blake’s mystical vision of Kings Cross one layer in this palimpsest, Dun provides a parallel map*
that excavates the historical myths and legends of Kings Cross: ‘We shall study maps of parallel worlds’ (VR, 11). Underlying Blake’s geographical mapping of Kings Cross, there are, as Dun illuminates, cultural myths and legends that surround St Pancras Old Church:

And in these nights, so ghostly and remote,
the long-time derelict church of Old Saint Pancras
draws the outlaw to it by the magnet of shadows. (VR, 15)

Dun attributes the occult and mysterious nature of Kings Cross to William Stukeley, an antiquarian searching for ‘the jewel of Luciferic magic’ (VR, 98). Dun suggests that Stukeley’s search has threatened the area with occult excavations. In Cycle One, Blake redresses Stukeley’s evil power through his powerful mythic vision of the past.

Dun rewrites Blake by imagining him in two different ways: as a child in search of material gains, as well as assisting Stukeley in his occult antiquarian pursuits; and imbued with the power of visionary redemption. Dun imagines Blake as a lost child escaping from the smoky metropolis and wandering in the vicinity of the church. Blake at first is interpreted as a ‘farmboy’, ‘a fearless pickpocket...hiding a golden timepiece in a cracking tomb’ (VR, 18). Like Stukeley, he is imagined as an occult figure searching for worldly means, but he is also contrasted with Stukeley in that he is redeemed by the visionary power of the place. Dun imagines Blake encountering the apparition of Satan and assisting William Stukeley in his search for earthly treasures. Yet Dun mythologizes Blake by imagining him as a knight searching for the Holy Grail: ‘a Grail Knight advancing on the Chapel Perilous’ (VR, 18). The Chapel Perilous in the Grail legend is a mysterious and deadly place where a Knight or a hero encounters terrifying adventures. In The Waste Land, the approach to the Chapel Perilous, according to Eliot’s notes, is one of the themes of ‘What the Thunder Said’. According to Jessie Weston,
Knights see devils and go through terrible ordeals in their quest for the Holy Grail. Blake’s encounter with the apparition of Satan in St Pancras Old Church parallels Weston’s account of the adventure of meeting the devil in the Chapel Perilous. In this process, Dun transforms Blake into a Grail Knight searching for spiritual illumination and truth. Consequently, Cycle One refers to the idea that Kings Cross is a site of two competing forces: one represented by Stukeley and one by Blake. Dun contrasts Stukeley’s materialistic aim with Blake’s spiritual rebirth as a result of the healing power of the place. This idea bears an interesting connection with the myth of the Fisher King. According to Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, the king cannot redeem the land unless he has faith in the power of the Grail. Dun suggests, by making Blake a quester for the Grail, that Blake can redeem the mystery of the place and thus reveal its sacredness. When Blake sees ‘a tree full of angels’, Dun states that ‘he is different’ (*VR*, 22). Dun suggests here that Blake’s vision of the New Jerusalem is the outcome of a struggle with a mysterious and occult power. Thus, by reviving Blake’s vision which contrasts with Stukeley’s, Dun resacralises Kings Cross. As Sinclair points out, Dun’s objective is to bring once again St Pancras Old Church to the sacred site proposed by William Blake (*LOT*, 140).

Arguably, this reading of Blake suggests that Dun uses the two poets as a literary device in order to present a new vision of London. In other words, celebrating Blake and Chatterton and their visionary power is part of the poem’s goal but the poem also sets Blake and Chatterton in a position that provides a critical perspective on the city’s social and cultural systems. *Vale Royal* appears to belong to a tradition of poems that escape the dreary urban life of the contemporary metropolis in favour of a visionary and illuminating past. The opening stanzas of the poem assert this tendency to create the utopia to which the speaker wishes to escape from the boredom of

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modern life. This romantic idealisation of the past suggests that Dun’s vision of London diverges from early modernist poetic representations of the city as in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, for example, which seeks to confront the modern metropolis and the sordid urban reality which it represents. Yet this idea of escapism forms only part of Dun’s purpose. *Vale Royal* should be read as a palimpsest where an idealisation of the past overlays the degenerate condition of the modern city.

In his review of *Vale Royal*, Michael Moorcock suggests that the poem heralds the return of romanticism and the use of ghostly visitations as a useful device that marks the new London since the war. What Moorcock implies is that the poetry of post-war London captures the new reality which the war has generated: that the Second World War not only destroyed the city’s fabric but also human aspirations and hopes. This new representation of London in the post-war era led many poets to see London through the spectral and the temporal. The question of reviving the ghosts of the past challenges the war’s hegemonic, destructive power. Dun suggests that this magnificent and inspiring place (i.e. Kings Cross) is now forgotten and seeks to revive the literary ghosts of the past, Blake and Chatterton, in order to present another perspective from which the contemporary city can be seen. Consequently, the reader should not be carried away with the poem’s subject matter and materials but should see the poem outside its frame of reference. In other words, the poem revives romanticism and uses romantic techniques (such as personification, emphasis on imagination, interiorisation, etc), placing Blake and Chatterton in a modernist context, but it is far from being a romantic poem, like Blake’s *Jerusalem* or


Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, for instance. Dun returns to the ghosts of the past to revive our contact with London.

Dun revives the romantics in order to contrast the London of Blake and Chatterton with his own vision of London. This new perspective is manifest in the various references to contemporary London in *Vale Royal* which reflect Dun’s attitude towards the city. For example, London is more than once referred to as a necropolis (*VR*, 37), a medusa, a snake. This is one of the explicit connections between Dun and Eliot which I will discuss later in the chapter. There are passages in which Dun explicitly laments the modern city when he perceives it through the eyes of the romantics. Dun presents the imagination of Blake and Chatterton as a solution to the condition of the modern metropolis. Blake and Chatterton will transcend this condition by reviving London’s mythic past. In the second cycle, for instance, Dun describes Chatterton’s revival of the city through his imagination:

Into the paradise of the wasteland he plunges.
The Fleet River sings of her pure genealogy,
her ancient sources in the seven springs of Kenwood. (*VR*, 41)

Dun suggests in the two cycles that there are different competing attitudes towards London. Dun, through Chatterton, laments London: ‘a city once rich with harvesting the glorious arts/ but now the wasteground of respectable greed’ (*VR*, 46). These lines suggest a dual vision of London. Whilst celebrating the past visions of London, Dun laments its intellectual poverty. It has become a wasteland, no longer a city of art.

Dun revives the romantics in order to transform this urban wasteland into Blake’s heavenly city. So Dun is indebted to Blake. But while Blake has withdrawn from the urban
environment into mysticism, Dun, arguably, does not lose contact with urban reality. In his comment on Vale Royal, the poet Christopher Reid remarks that: ‘London itself—the London we know now, with its grimy brick terraces and bullying road traffic—barely registers on the poet’s sensory equipment, so alert is he [Dun] to the intimations of some ulterior reality.’ Dun gives more importance to the past which contrasts with the ugly presence of a contemporary city, represented by grimy cityscapes and the modern degeneration of values. For Dun, it is the reality of the hidden past which gives meaning to, and shapes our conception of, modern urban life.

In the second cycle, Dun rewrites Chatterton, as he did with Blake, through the mythic implications with which he endows the poet when Chatterton engages in ‘turning a myth of prior cities in his mind’ (VR, 48). Dun mythologizes, or re-conceives, the past through Blake and Chatterton—he imagines their unseen presence within the city. Chatterton mirrors Blake through his poetic re-imagination of ‘the city above the city’ which implies ‘the New Jerusalem built over Kings Cross’: ‘Above the lost river in Brook Street, he hides away. / He is safe. A utopian city is built again’ (VR, 47). Equating Chatterton with Blake’s ‘Albion’ is also a way to mythologize the poet: ‘How can Albion lie in the sewers of Egypt’ (VR, 46). In Blake’s Jerusalem, Albion refers to Great Britain and in Vale Royal Chatterton is referred to as ‘Thomas of Britain’ (VR, 82), which is also a way to endow the poet with mythical and cosmological significances. Chatterton is transfigured into Odysseus: ‘And the London odyssey of Thomas the Rhymer/ moves with mysterious undercurrents of fatality’ (VR, 76). Chatterton mirrors the Greek hero, Odysseus, in his wanderings and the marvellous adventures he encounters before he returns home:


In the pale relief of a daybreak landscape he turns,
moving through an endless graveyard of medieval times,
starting for modern-day Holborn, still in his dreams…(VR, 82)

These lines are reminiscent of when Odysseus at the end of Homer’s epic turns back home and
restarts his journey. Odysseus is regarded as a symbol of power, the King of Ithaca in Greek
mythology. Dun equates Chatterton with Odysseus in order to emphasise Chatterton’s struggle
with other forces – the Masonic machinations.

Dun imagines Chatterton coming back from history as if an ancient mythic figure. Dun
dramatizes the psychological forces at work in Chatterton’s mind; the legendary figures that are
conjured up from history within Chatterton echo his own poetic struggles. Boadicea’s fight
against the Romans (VR, 60) resonates with Chatterton’s rebellion against the Masons. The
conspiracy against Edmund Ironside and his being assassinated by secret agents (VR, 62) reflects
the conspiracy of the Masons against Chatterton. Dr Faustus as a revolutionary figure is
conspired against by the devil (VR, 64). Chatterton mirrors Thomas Rowley, a poet-priest
Chatterton invents, who embodies his desire to retrace history. Dun makes Chatterton
interchangeable with Thomas the Rhymer (VR, 34) the medieval Scottish poet. These dramatic
correspondences form part of the way in which Dun historicizes London.

This large web of associations suggests why the second cycle of Vale Royal is longer
than the first. The two cycles are unequal. The first cycle differs from the second in that it
grapples with Blake’s mythic vision as an opposing force against Stukeley’s power of magic,
whereas the second cycle reveals a different reality: Chatterton’s suffering and his constant
attempts to defy Masonic machinations. In this sense, the second cycle exhibits much more
forcefully the suffering of the artist. One of the problems of the first cycle is that it does not
explore this idea clearly. The second cycle dramatises Chatterton’s literary and mythic power
that fails to stand up against the degenerate social values of the metropolis. Cycle one discloses
William Stukeley’s evil power and malpractices redressed by Blake’s rectifying power:

the child-sacrifices of the worshippers of Baal defiled the holy place just as Stukeley’s
malpractices put St Pancras in danger, until Blake and his fellow Romantic poets swept
aside the flow of evil with their all-powerful visions of a purer society (VR, 102).

Cycle two reveals the defeat of the artist and his fall at the mercy of the torturers, who cast him
into hell. Dun imagines Chatterton drinking poison poured by the demon Lilith: ‘Look! She
steadies the glass as he rises up/ and dissolves the evil milk of her breast inside’ (VR, 86). So
Dun in the two cycles presents two different interpretations of the poet’s struggle against the
social forces of his time.

One of the interesting ideas in Vale Royal is how Chatterton becomes an impersonation
of Dun through his poetic technique of reviving ancient history:

From the dark core of another lifetime,
in the tongue of a distant century, he ignites
in sixty thousand ancient lines. Selah.

An eight-spoked wheel and a winged sphere—
he is the legend of transmigrations returning,
his destiny at first misunderstood. (VR, 35)

Here Dun’s description of Chatterton’s recreation of the past reflects his own poetic technique in
Vale Royal. These stanzas remind us of the narrator’s vision of the past at the beginning of the
poem where the poet sees the Pan Cross and the workers who build ‘the Cathedral of the
Sunchild’ (VR, 10). This technique of impersonation raises some questions concerning Dun’s
relation to the two romantic poets. Commenting on Dun’s technique, Sinclair states:
The peculiar charm of Dun’s poem is its anonymity: egoic interference is minimal, the poet wills himself to disappear into his text. He recovers it, rather than inventing it. He spurns novelty and shock effects. At readings—long-jacketed, loose-laced, tense and trembling—he whispers the riffs: as if some messenger had just, at that moment delivered them. With no script to prompt him, he reads from a phantom autocue. Eyes wide and unblinking. The poet impersonating the poem (LOT, 141).

Sinclair implies that the poem is mediated by a higher power, as if there were a muse speaking through Dun. Sinclair suggests that Dun does not interfere in the text. But if we look at Dun’s mirroring technique in the poem, we find that the two poets are impersonations of Dun. The first-person narrator at the beginning of the poem expresses a personal vision. In the two cycles, however, this narrator does not engage in expressing his vision but those of other poets. He becomes a third-person narrator. Dun impersonates other poets, rather than creating an artistic distance. The mirroring motif in the poem poses a problem because we cannot identify Dun’s objective in the poem except through what he reveals about Blake and Chatterton. The two cycles reveal the idea that poets always respond to the problems of their time. Blake and Chatterton mirror Dun in terms of their desire to reconceptualise the city. This mirroring technique disguises Dun’s personal feelings towards the city— it is difficult to decide what forces Dun reacts against.

This impersonation technique is a new way of presenting the role of the poet in relation to the characters he reinvents. It is a way of achieving both subjectivity and objectivity. Dun’s creation of Blake and Chatterton in the poem is objective but because he impersonates these poets he is also subjective. Most of Eliot’s poems strive to achieve some form of objectivity without the intrusion of the subject. In ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ (1917), and ‘Gerontion’ (1920), for example, there is no way of perceiving that Prufrock and Gerontion are impersonations of Eliot, though the two characters are Eliot’s creation. In ‘Tradition and the
Individual Talent’ (1919), Eliot states that ‘the poet has, not a “personality” to express, but a particular medium’ (SP, 42). Eliot here is responding to the Romantic notion of ‘self-expression’. For Eliot, the poet does not express himself but creates a voice that expresses itself. Thus the first-person voice in Eliot’s poems is different from the first-person voice in Wordsworth poems, for instance. In Eliot’s poems the ‘I’ refers to a character in the poem (like Tiresias, Prufrock, or Gerontion). The idea that the poet expresses a particular medium implies that the concept of ‘impersonality’ has so much to do with form and technique. Dun seems to rethink Eliot’s concept of impersonality because he implicates himself in the poem and at the same time expresses an objective poetic medium. Dun’s mode of impersonation and the resurgence of subjectivity is realised, as emphasised in the notes, through constructing a relation between Vale Royal, ‘the valley of the lost Fleet River in Kings Cross’ and the poets who ‘made this forgotten place royal with their presence’ (VR, 95). Dun here is not only reviving Blake and Chatterton ‘who made the forgotten place royal with their presence’ but also recreating himself as one of these poets. That is to say, he also makes this forgotten place royal with his presence. Thus the act of writing the object is simultaneously an act of writing the subject.

ii. Unwriting Modernism

The idea that Dun’s Vale Royal rethinks Eliot’s notion of ‘impersonality’ brings us to investigate how Dun responds to modernism’s view of literary tradition. Vale Royal reconsiders the critical issues that were central in modernism such as literary tradition and the poet’s view of the past. While Eliot in The Waste Land laments the European culture that has disintegrated into disconnected fragments, Dun, as Sinclair notes, ‘polishes each cerulean fragment before setting it
into the mosaic pavement' (LOT, 148). Vale Royal presents Dun’s attempt to bring a large body of material into shape. Dun collects from the cultural past the legends, myths, beliefs, folktales, facts, and pieces of historical evidence that surround or relate to Kings Cross in order to give a shape and significance to Kings Cross. Like Eliot, Dun acknowledges the significance of tradition. He is indebted to the two romantic poets Blake and Chatterton. Vale Royal then has something to say about literary tradition, not the classical tradition of Homer or Dante but that of Blake and Chatterton. Both of these traditions are reflected in Eliot and Dun, who, despite their considerable differences, are at once concerned with the poet’s conception of tradition and the relation between poets and their ancestors. Dun’s return to the romantics as his traditional ancestors opposes Eliot’s view of tradition as ‘the mind of Europe—the mind of [the poet’s] own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind’ (SP, 39). This statement reflects Eliot’s impersonal view of tradition. Eliot believes that the mind of Europe is the mind of the poet that does not, to use Eliot’s word, ‘superannuate’ Shakespeare or Homer. The poet’s private mind is subsumed by, or included in, the mind of Europe. This theory contrasts with Dun’s psychogeographical practice through which he conceives place as a symbolic container of the private mind: ‘a perfect place to realize the vision of oneness’ (VR, 95).

Dun’s mirroring technique, where Chatterton, for instance, reflects Rowley and Dun reflects Chatterton and Blake, opposes Eliot’s conception of tradition which ‘cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour’ (SP, 38). Eliot here challenges the general idea that tradition is handed down automatically from one generation to another. Vale Royal deconstructs this outlook through the concept of ‘hauntology’ and the return of the past. Dun’s poem, in this sense, departs from Eliot’s spatial apprehension of tradition (that in the mind of the poet the whole literature of Europe forms a simultaneous existence) and the imagistic method of
The Waste Land, endorsing instead a cyclical view of metropolitan literary lives. The poem's structure is supportive of this idea because it is built on two cycles which imply a cyclical view of history and the return of the traditional past as significant factors in shaping the poet's sense of place. Vale Royal differs from The Waste Land in terms of the poems' outlook on the past. The poet-narrator's account of the life and work of Blake and Chatterton and their mystic visions of Kings Cross is delivered with authority. Eliot's line which states that we know only a 'heap of broken images' implies that the mind of the modern poet can only envision a fragmentary, disconnected past. Dun challenges this modernist tendency by presenting an elaborate or detailed description of the lost voices in the metropolis. Instead of providing a cluster of fragmentary images from Blake and Chatterton, Dun confidently views the past through his mystic, spiritual vision and is capable of dwelling on it commandingly. This power in having a perceptive vision of the past characterises Dun's poetic achievement in the poem and reflects the new urban experience that emerged since the war.

By way of contrast, this perceptive vision is problematic in Eliot's portrayal of Prufrock who refuses to see himself in relation to Hamlet. Between Prufrock and his sense of the historical literary past there is a barrier he cannot transcend. Prufrock asserts his individual identity by refusing to be another Hamlet. In a similar vein, Gerontion's statement that: 'History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors' suggests a limited perspective on the past and the uncertainty of history. The statement implies that the speaker has no faith in history. Gerontion rejects history because it symbolises anarchy. In Little Gidding (iii) the speaker hears voices of the dead but cannot decode their messages. These examples reveal modernism's troubled relationship with the past which resulted from the inclination to articulate the new modernist consciousness that was shaped by the war.
Though *Vale Royal* and *The Waste Land* underline this new urban experience that was shaped by the two destructive world wars, we find a difference between Eliot's Prufrock, for instance, and Dun's Chatterton. Dun imagines Chatterton travelling back in time to revisit history's 'cunning passages' and 'contrived corridors':

In the vast cycle of his London mysteries,

He salutes the woman who sleeps beside the Fleet.  
He touches her shoulder and wakes her gently,  
hoping she will rise up again in future rebellions,

And lay down her life for the equalisation of the opposites. (*VR*, 60)

Here Dun celebrates Chatterton's power to conjure Queen Boadicea and resurrect the dead from the necropolis of the past. Dun explores the possibility of transcending the barrier between the present and the past through his account of the cultural history of the city and the authority of reading Blake and Chatterton. He seems to suggest that poets possess a penetrating vision into the historical chaos. This propensity is inconceivable in early modernist poetry because it cannot comprehend the possibility of constructing a discourse with the forgotten past.

The relation between poets and their dead ancestors in *Vale Royal* and *The Waste Land* calls to mind Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence. Bloom's theory is concerned with poetic influence and the relation between poets and literary tradition. In light of this theory, poems have their meaning in relation to other poems, and poets derive their inspiration from reading previous poets. This process creates an anxiety between originality and influence. According to Bloom, to achieve a distinctive poetic voice, the poet has to break from the precursor's influence. Graham Allen's reading of Bloom's theory is suggestive:
For Bloom, poets employ the central figures of previous poetry but they transform, redirect, reinterpret those already written figures in new ways and hence generate the illusion that their poetry is not influenced by, and not therefore a misreading of, the precursor’s poem.137

Blake and Chatterton in Vale Royal represent Dun’s precursors. His presentation of Chatterton, that he is not a forger, is, debatably, an example of an intentional misreading or misinterpretation of the poet, which Bloom asserts as a necessary element in establishing an original voice. In Blake’s cycle, Dun creates a distinctive poetic voice by rewriting Blake’s vision, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter. This rewriting marks Dun’s new treatment of the poet. In light of Bloom’s theory, the central question in Vale Royal is how Dun makes Blake and Chatterton mirror him and yet creates a new original way of reading the two poets.

Bloom’s theory of poetic influence develops, arguably, from Eliot’s criticism, for Eliot was also preoccupied with tradition and the relation between poets and their ancestors. As he states in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919):

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism (SP, 38).

Eliot suggests that there is an inevitable relation between poets and their dead masters. This conception of the poet’s relation to the dead poets before him forms the basis of Bloom’s theory of poetic influence. However, Bloom takes Eliot’s theory of tradition further by relating the concept of ‘the anxiety of influence’ to Freudian psychoanalysis which involves uncovering drives and motives in mental processes. But while Eliot suggests that poets can be judged through the method of comparison and contrast with their ancestors, Bloom sees literary

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achievements as barriers to poetic originality, thus creating an anxiety of influence. According to Bloom, the poet’s misreading of his precursors is a mechanism to create his own distinctive voice. In Vale Royal, Dun constructs an original voice by imagining struggling forces between Blake and Stukeley in Cycle One and between Chatterton and the Masons in Cycle Two. These struggling forces are projected onto modern Kings Cross. Dun places Blake and Chatterton in a modernist context and offers a new reading of the two romantic poets by using them as a means to reflect his conception of the contemporary metropolis. In The Waste Land, Eliot employs a similar technique when he uses the poetic visions of Baudelaire and Dante, for instance, in order to reinforce his sordid vision of the modern metropolis.

However, while Eliot focuses on literary production, as he suggests in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919): ‘Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry’ (SP, 40), Dun centralises his poem on both poets and their poetry by including some biographical details of the life and death of Blake and Chatterton and by transforming factual details into an imaginative work. In Cycle One, for instance, Blake’s wandering as a child of seven in the countryside of Kings Cross is transformed in an imaginative way into ‘a dramatisation of the conflict of innocence and witchcraft which beset Blake’s life’ (VR, 98). In Cycle Two, Dun weaves a mystery around the life and death of Thomas Chatterton: ‘no-one can decipher his mysterious existence/ or translate the magical language of his life’ (VR, 28). Through this he suggests that both Chatterton’s poetry and the biographical details of his life and death can be used and transformed into poetry.

Dun’s interest in biographical details reflects the concept of hauntology and the return of the past in Vale Royal which contrasts with Eliot’s preoccupation with ontological issues in The Waste Land, which reveals the metropolis as a place where the individual lives at a midpoint
between life and death. Eliot mourns the dead and those who live a death in life. The first section, 'The Burial of the Dead', suggests death and resurrection. The speaker in this section ponders on his existence: 'I was neither/ Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence' (CPP, 62) and 'He who was living is now dead/ We who were living are now dying' (CPP, 72). Dun's Vale Royal rejects death as an ultimate reality and this is evidenced by the revival of the past and the return of Blake and Chatterton (Eliot’s ghosts) to haunt the poet’s mind. It is as if Dun is omnivorously roaming the past trying to revive romantic voices from Eliot's necropolis.

The concept of 'hauntology' in Vale Royal suggests the possibility of communicating with the forgotten historical past and the need to transcend the barrier between the living and the dead, the visible and the invisible. This idea is qualified by Dun's claim to have 'broken up the imprints of all familiar places' (VR, 9). This suggests that the poet transcends the sordid reality of the material city to uncover the underlying layers of its past. He intends to reveal the hidden secrets of the past. This strategy implies a special way of perception, a way of envisioning what is concealed. Dun's way of revealing what is hidden is a defamiliarizing technique, for he diverges from habitual and ordinary ways of perceiving the city by uncovering, through a mystic love of Kings Cross, what lies beyond the confines of the visible. Arguably, Dun's way of perception differs from that of Eliot who universalises London, perceiving it in visual terms, as the manuscripts of The Waste Land reveal: 'Unreal/ Terrible city, I have sometimes seen and see' (WLFT, 9). So Dun's claim that he has 'broken up the imprints of all familiar places' suggests that he transcends the limitations of the visual through his tendency to illuminate what is invisible.
This conception marks a new representation of London in late twentieth-century poetry of the city evidenced by Dun’s awareness of the temporal dimension: ‘We burn the lamp of memory to retrace, / To penetrate and know the darkness of time’ (VR, 11). This awareness suggests a difference between Dun’s and Eliot’s temporal conception. Dun views Kings Cross as a palimpsest, a document from which he erases Eliot’s hegemonic modern vision of the city. He does not see lightning, for instance, as a destructive element—which is used to express a negative attitude towards the city in The Waste Land—but as an illuminating agent that reveals mysteries:

The lightning tears through the night’s black raiment,
leaving all her mysteries naked, illuminating
the stonework of the philosophical doorway. (VR, 24)

Dun, thus, does not only see the city as a visual space but also as a multi-layered historical space through which Troynovant, the ‘great forerunner of London on the Thames’ rises out of the chronicles of Britain (VR, 48). What characterises Dun’s particular way of perception is this tendency to go beyond time and space in order to retrieve the past. This new representation of the city uses the spectral as a literary technique to disturb early modernism’s conventional, hegemonic vision of the city. In a sense, spectrality and the return of eras which underlie Dun’s representation of the city violate the dominant view of the city as a degenerate urban wasteland.

The Waste Land does not address the spectral in the same way as Vale Royal does. Though Eliot refers overtly to the spectral by quoting Baudelaire’s lines where ghosts haunt the passer-by, it is the sordid reality of modern urban life that dominates the poem. In the manuscripts of The Waste Land, Eliot deleted a line which was an answer as to what the wind does: ‘Carrying away the little light dead people’ (WLFT, 13) and this suggests that Eliot
suppresses, or does not seriously address, the spectral. The sprouting of the corpse in ‘The Burial of the Dead’ is conveyed with an implicit ironic tone. However, in his later poetry, Eliot revises this notion of the spectral, albeit in a negative sense. In *Little Gidding*, for example, the walker recalls a hallucinated scene after an air raid in Blitzed London but he does so to assert the negative effect of war. The spectral here impinges negatively on the observer’s consciousness. In *Little Gidding*, Eliot’s conception of place through the temporal reveals a different reality:

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We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (CPP, 197)
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Knowing the place for the first time after revisiting it suggests the circularity of time. This notion marks a new apprehension of space that contrasts with the early poems’ imagistic cityscapes seen in temporal, flashing moments.

Eliot’s and Dun’s view of the temporal suggest different conceptions of the ‘mythical method’. If Tiresias provides a mythical perspective, as Eliot states in the notes of *The Waste Land*, through which characters are unified, there is an implied perspective (i.e. that of the modern world), as Jewel Spears Brooker observes, which sees characters as separate and distinct.\(^\text{138}\) This idea insinuates that Eliot conceives the past and the present as opposites because the past brings order to the chaos of the present. But while Eliot moves from the past to the present, Dun reverses this method by moving from the time of Blake and Chatterton towards the further past and the beginning of the Christian era. Perceived as such, the forces that shape history hold up a mirror to the contemporary life of the metropolis. Blake’s vision which swept away the evil of William Stukeley, Chatterton’s rebellion against the Masons, Constantine’s

vision of the Pan Cross which led him to conquer Rome and rectify traditional theologies, Dr Faustus’ rebellion against the limits set by Christianity, are some of the forces which Dun locates within history in order to reflect on contemporary London. Dun seeks to highlight the existence of these forces:

We illuminate an existence of other centuries.
We experience the outbreak of metaphysical wars
between the Sunchild and the Spirit of Typhon. (VR, 11)

Evoking these forces from the past contributes to Dun’s mythologizing of Kings Cross. While Eliot imports myth from various sources and views it as giving order to art, as his comment on Joyce’s Ulysses illustrates, Dun regenerates the latent myths of London. The mythic emerges from the narrator’s historical view of the past of Kings Cross as something that is embedded in the cultural history of Kings Cross itself. Kings Cross is mythic because there are legends and beliefs that surround it. These are the inhabitants’ beliefs:

If you talk to the old folk who know this district backwards,
in taverns and by firesides you will hear it said
the place lies too close to the supernatural worlds. (VR, 16)

Dun here creates the popular, cultural myths of Kings Cross, unlike Eliot who derives his myths from traditional literary sources. Eliot brings the myths of the past to shed light on the chaos of the present. Dun has a similar objective but he works from the present towards the past. He starts with how the inhabitants see Kings Cross and the mysterious legends surrounding this place, tracing these legends further back to the past. Why is the place haunted by ghosts? Why did Blake see the New Jerusalem over Kings Cross? And what does Blake’s vision tell us about Kings Cross? These are the questions that Dun tries to answer by revisiting the past of Kings
Cross to reveal its significance and its relation to the Christian tradition. Dun’s myths in this sense are local, unlike Eliot’s myths which are cosmopolitan.

This idea of the local and the cosmopolitan can be clarified by examining the two poets’ use of the allusive method. Eliot’s literary allusions become, towards the end of the poem, the fragments he shored against his ruins. None of these allusions is central because they are part of a pattern through which they are juxtaposed spatially. Like Eliot, Dun uses notes and acknowledges a debt to other writers such as Blake, Chatterton, Shelley, Coleridge, Yeats, and Rimbaud. He includes lines from Blake’s *Jerusalem* (the Golden Quatrain) in the notes of *Vale Royal*. Had Eliot written *Vale Royal* he would have made Blake’s lines part of the poem’s structure. While *The Waste Land* quotes from various poets, *Vale Royal* centralises two major literary allusions, Blake and Chatterton. Eliot borrowed lines from Dante to arouse in the reader’s imagination a Dantesque scene and to connect the modern crowd with the crowd in the *Inferno* (*TCTC*, 128). Dun, similarly, arouses in the reader’s memory a Blakean vision of Kings Cross. He does so not by incorporating Blake’s lines into the poem but by rewriting his vision and by making him an integral part of the poem.

Consequently, had Eliot followed this method in *The Waste Land*, he would have ended up writing volumes. This is because *The Waste Land* does not dwell much on literary allusions by elaborating upon the fragment to explore its hidden depths. They remain detached and unearthed. *The Waste Land* tends to use the literary past as a means to reflect on the modern condition of the city. Commenting on the literary allusions of *The Waste Land*, Conrad Aiken refuses the theory that ‘there is nothing left for literature to do but become a kind of parasitic growth on literature’, but he also suggests that ‘the theory is interesting if only because it has
colored an important and brilliant piece of work. Indeed, *The Waste Land* is inconceivable without its literary allusions, suggesting the idea that the mind of the modern poet is only capable of collecting fragments from the past.

There is then a difference between Eliot’s and Dun’s method of literary borrowings. In the ‘Unreal city’ passage, Eliot superimposes Baudelaire’s and Dante’s visions to express a ghost-like vision of the London crowd. Through this reference to the two poets, Eliot suggests that the modern poet cannot ignore other literary representations of the modern city and that literary minds mirror one another. The use of the two poets allows Eliot to construct a cosmological vision of London which shares with other cities (Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, etc.) the same urban decay and alienation. This juxtaposition suggests that Eliot’s London is also Baudelaire’s Paris. Compared with Eliot, Dun dwells more on his literary allusions, giving the two romantic figures more freedom to express their poetic visions. This process allows Dun to localise London. If Eliot created a spatial (or horizontal) pattern in his use of literary borrowings, Dun creates a vertical (or temporal) one, providing more depth in his references to the two romantic poets.

Though *Vale Royal* limits its scope of literary borrowings, it incorporates a large amount of historical material. If ‘Eliot protested against the nineteenth-century tendency to see everything in history’, as Fraser points out, *Vale Royal* tends to revive this tendency by revealing an overall insightful vision of the historical city. Eliot suggested that the historical sense is significant because it ‘compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe...has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order’ (*SP*, 38). Throughout *Vale Royal*, Dun exhibits this

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historical sense of the past; however, if judged from Eliot’s perspective, Dun is not conscious of
the whole literature of Europe but the literature of England. Eliot stresses the relation between
the poet and the past in ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’:

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can
neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus, nor can he form himself wholly
upon one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred
period. The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement (SP, 39).

These statements underline Eliot’s view of the poet’s relation to the past. What Eliot implies is
that if a poet has a partial view of the past, he will not be able to develop the historical sense. In
*Vale Royal*, Dun restricts himself to one preferred period (i.e. Romanticism). His private
adorations are Blake and Chatterton. Dun then exhibits a partial historical sense that opposes
Eliot’s conception of poetry ‘as a living whole of all the poetry that has been written’ (my italics)
(SP, 40).

This interest in romanticism brings us to see Eliot and Dun in terms of the romantic and
the classical. Dun offers a new vision of London by rewriting these romantic voices that oppose
a predominant authority. Representing Chatterton as ‘a secret agent overlooking the Platonic
State’ (*VR*, 64) suggests the interplay of conflicting forces: that Chatterton, by reviving the
mythic utopian cities of London, is challenging those who advocate Plato’s notion of the ideal
city that does not exist on earth. In *The Republic*, Plato could not attribute truth to poetry. He
banned poets from his ideal republic because they corrupt people’s minds with the earthly City
of Man. Through Chatterton and Blake, Dun challenges this Platonic view by endowing the two
romantic poets with a messianic role. As Dun points out in the notes of the poem, Blake and
Chatterton play the role of the Sunchild (i.e. Christ). This association insinuates that poets can
communicate truths and rectify misconceptions. Commenting on Chatterton as a re-builder of the ideal city, Dun suggests that Chatterton epitomises a revolutionary force: ‘He is building a metaphysical palace’ (VR, 72). In his note to this line, Dun states that ‘Chatterton is building an invisible and revolutionary Kingdom’ (VR, 123). This comment implies that Chatterton is responding to a predominant opposing force which is that of the Masons who advocate the Platonic state. So, the two struggling forces in Dun’s poem reflect in a sense the dichotomy between romantic and classicist ideals.

Writers such as Plato and St. Augustine associate religion, wisdom, and justice with their visions of a better world. Dun attributes this trait to the romantics by imagining them as rebels capable of revealing significant truths through their insights. Eliot, according to Valerie Eliot’s editorial notes to the ‘Unreal City’, seems to adopt Plato’s view of the heavenly City of God (WLFT, 127-28) which may be construed as an alternative to the degenerate modern wasteland. Like Plato, Eliot does not attribute truth to the self but to a pervasive religious authority outside the self. In ‘The Function of Criticism’ (1923), Eliot criticises romanticism’s belief in an ‘Inner Voice’ (SP, 73). He argues that classicism endows the critic with ‘the possibility of arriving at something outside of ourselves, which may provisionally be called “truth”’ (SP, 76). Whether ‘truth’ is subjectively or objectively mediated is a philosophical question that is left unanswered. What the statement clearly underlines is that classicism, as Eliot conceives it, is a form of commitment to an authority outside the self. Eliot believes in this higher authority that dictates the individual’s behaviour. This follows that ‘belief’, according to Eliot, is not entirely subjective. It is imposed by a higher institution. This subservience to a superior authority forms the basis of Eliot’s classical attitude which contrasts with Dun’s belief in the introspective self: ‘But nothing here is real without belief’ (VR, 11). In romanticism, the reality of the objective world and the
belief in one's potentials are in harmony. *Vale Royal* attempts to revive this nineteenth-century belief in individualism. This is manifest in Dun's belief in Blake's subjective, internal vision of Kings Cross as central to the New Jerusalem and in Chatterton's power to 'turn a myth of prior cities in his mind' (*VR*, 48).

In 'The Function of Criticism', furthermore, Eliot's anti-romantic attitude is clear in his comment that the difference between Classicism and Romanticism: 'seems to me rather the difference between the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic' (*SP*, 70). Eliot views Romanticism as fragmentary, immature, and chaotic. Eliot, as Victor Brombert rightly argues, sees Baudelaire as a classicist, despite the poet's romantic allegiances:

Eliot, ..., fascinated by the *Fleur du Mai* and perhaps even more by the intimate writings of Baudelaire, has heroically attempted to rescue him from his period, perhaps even from himself. He has tried to suggest that Baudelaire, though inevitably the offspring of Romanticism and doomed to work with the materials on hand, was a classicist by nature, and the first counter-Romantic in poetry.141

In 'Religion and Literature' (1935), Eliot associates Baudelaire with Dante and Racine, who are, in his words, 'Christian poets' (*SE*, 391) and this association suggests that for Eliot Christianity and Classicism are indivisible. In the same essay, Eliot argues that religion sharpens and channels the critic's literary judgements:

What I believe to be incumbent upon all Christians is the duty of maintaining consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world; and that by these criteria and standards everything we read must be tested (*SE*, 399).

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The statement implies that religion provides the critic with the necessary critical standards for his work.

Using the concept of ‘impersonality’ as a criterion by which he judges the romantics, Eliot acknowledges Blake’s genius, but finds that Blake lacks the impersonality which is an essential characteristic of classical poets. Interestingly, Eliot views Blake in a different way from Dun:

Blake was endowed with a capacity for considerable understanding of human nature, with a remarkable and original sense of language and the music of language, and a gift of hallucinated vision. Had these been controlled by a respect for impersonal reason, for common sense, for the objectivity of science, it would have been better for him. What his genius required, and what it sadly lacked, was a framework of accepted and traditional ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own, and concentrated his attention on the problems of the poet....The concentration resulting from a framework of mythology and theology and philosophy is one of the reasons why Dante is classic, and Blake only a poet of genius (SE, 322).

Implied in this passage is the idea that poets who lack a sense of tradition indulge in their own self and emotionalism. This is why Eliot sees romanticism as immature. Tradition, as the passage asserts, which is a form of adherence to a truth outside the self, allows poets to create an impersonal voice. Blake cannot therefore be equated with the classics such as Dante.

This viewpoint contrasts with Dun’s reading of Blake and Chatterton in Vale Royal as prophetic visionaries capable of revealing inner, and yet, universal truths. Chatterton is represented as a rebel who subverts the oppressive order by revealing his inner mythic visions of the past. Thus Vale Royal focuses on the individual’s experience through the evocation of Kings Cross as a subjective space, mediated through Blake’s and Chatterton’s visions. This tendency is inconceivable in The Waste Land which marginalises the individual concentrating instead on the anonymous urban crowd.
Eliot’s view of classicism is closely bound up with his conception of literary and artistic form when he states that the era of modernism is marked by a return to classicism:

The beginning of the twentieth century has witnessed a return to the ideals of classicism. These may roughly be characterized as form and restraint in art, discipline and authority in religion, centralization in government (either as socialism or monarchy). The classicist point of view has been defined as essentially a belief in Original Sin—the necessity for austere discipline.\(^\text{142}\)

This link between classicism and form can be tested in Eliot’s commentary on Joyce’s *Ulysses* in ‘*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*’ (1923). Eliot praises *Ulysses* for constructing a new way of shaping and structuring a literary work, a condition to which, according to Eliot, all good literature must strive. Thus Eliot is not reviving classicism *per se* more than he is using classicism to provide a new modernist perspective. In light of this suggestion, Eliot’s outlook is more neo-classical than classical. Such a neo-classical outlook is evident in Eliot’s proposition that the mythic method is ‘a step toward making the modern world possible for art’ (*SP*, 178). This statement involves a form of restraint clothed in a universal view: that art is not possible in the modern world unless writers use the mythic method. Eliot then endeavours to rescue art in the modern world through the constraint of the mythic method which suggests his neo-classical outlook.

***iii. Dun’s Critique of Politics***

The differences between Eliot and Dun bring us to see *Vale Royal* in a new way. Dun’s revival of romantic voices and his poetic response to Eliot’s vision of the modern city leads us to speculate on Dun’s representation of contemporary London. In the notes of *Vale Royal*, Dun

insinuates that poets respond to the problems posed by the social milieu and that poets transform our sense of place and rebel against human suffering: 'The artists, the poets have made this forgotten place royal with their presence. And they themselves are royal because they are visionaries, in rebellion against the human condition and its suffering' \((VR, 95)\). Peter Barry suggests that Dun calls the valley 'royal' because Kings Cross attracted poets down the centuries. Barry notes that Dun's choice of the word 'royal' is inappropriate, 'for it now has distinctly tacky associations in the British public mind.'\(^{143}\) Dun seems to revive the English national heritage by calling poets 'royal'. The word describes the visionary characteristic of poets. Dun twins 'royalty' with 'visionary', and this association suggests that poets are 'royal' because they possess an imaginative power. In his notes, Dun suggests that 'Blake and his fellow Romantic poets swept aside the flow of evil with their all-powerful visions of a purer society' \((VR, 102)\).

The word 'royal' has political connotations. In the preface to *For Lancelot Andrews*, T.S. Eliot declared himself 'classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion.'\(^{144}\) The term 'royalist' here refers to Eliot's conservative political beliefs, his interest in royal authority and the established church. However, Dun attributes the term to Blake's and Chatterton's visions which oppose another force. Dun's use of the word 'royal' differs from Eliot's because Dun uses the word in reference to Blake and Chatterton and not to the governmental system.

For Dun, Blake's New Jerusalem implies not only an imaginative literary and religious construct but also a political critical practice. Blake's vision of the religious ideal society involves a critique of the city's social ills (and it is this aspect of Blake's vision that Dun


employs in his critique of the contemporary city). Dun uses Blake’s imagination to reflect on the contemporary condition of the city as a place that has become degenerate and forgotten. The word ‘royal’ has political and critical implications. For Dun poets are royal because they possess the power to imagine place in new ways. They revolt against moral deterioration and try to perfect society. Identifying Blake and Chatterton with the Sunchild (i.e. Christ, the Mighty Youth) supports this idea which indicates that the poet’s role is to bring enlightenment to the world. Put differently, giving Blake and Chatterton a messianic role indicates that they will rectify beliefs as Christ rectified the old Druidic theologies. For Dun, poets are marginalized or exiled within the social system. They illuminate the falseness of ritual beliefs, though they are not fully empowered against the prevailing dominant authority. So Dun’s use of these poets suggests that he is replacing one system of beliefs with another.

As the notes of the poem clarify, the relation between Christ and the two romantic poets is reciprocal because the lifecycle of the Sunchild reflects the exiled life of the artist and both Blake and Chatterton will play the role of the Sunchild in the poem’s two cycles. The verb ‘reflect’ reveals an important technique that runs throughout the poem (i.e. mirroring). Kings Cross imaginatively mirrors, for instance, the Valley of Shaveh which latter became the Valley of Hinnom, both of which refer to a valley in ancient Jerusalem that has certain meanings and resonances, that is, Gehenna or inferno (VR, 129). This technique of reflection (i.e. connecting two places, two figures, and figures with places such as Chatterton with St Mary Redcliff Church in Bristol or Constantine the Great with St Pancras Old Church) is significant because it gives Kings Cross historical and religious connotations. Dun’s objective is to show that Kings Cross is a sacred site. Put another way, this technique allows Dun to mythologize Kings Cross.
Throughout the poem, the question of mythologizing Kings Cross appears to be a response to an implicit dominating power. A possible answer as to why Dun mythologizes Kings Cross is that, as he states in the notes, 'at the present time, the area of Kings Cross is threatened with “development”' (VR, 99). Dun mentions this 'development' within the context that the Masons have reserved the area for the construction of their spiritual headquarters over Kings Cross. This idea also reflects, in a symbolic way, the urban development and regeneration that took place during Thatcher’s reign. The revival of Kings Cross during the 1990s was a response to the area’s bad reputation during the 1980s. It was notorious for prostitution and drug abuse. This led the government during the 1990s to launch the Kings Cross partnership in order to fund regeneration schemes which involved the construction of new residential districts. These plans restructured the area but effaced some of the district’s historical and geographical features. The Fleet river, for example, which was one of the distinctive geographical and historical features of Kings Cross in the eighteenth century, 'once famous for healing and medicinal waters', still runs under Kings Cross but is now bricked over and buried. In the notes Dun is aware of urban development and its effect on the inhabitants’ memories. Dun reveals that Brook Street, where Chatterton lived, was demolished with the other Georgian terraces in the nineteenth century (VR, 115). These examples suggest that Dun is responding to urban renewal. Underlying Dun’s revival of the ancient site of Kings Cross is the attempt to protect the city and preserve English national identity. Dun thus locates a kind of struggle between urban development on the one hand and the city’s historical and cultural legacies on the other.

This idea suggests that Dun employs myth as a conceptual framework that diametrically opposes modern urban development. In other words, he uses myth to provide a critical
perspective on the condition of the contemporary city which is constantly changing.

Commenting on Dun’s sense of urban development, Sinclair states that

Dun was one of the few people to be delighted by the construction of the new British Library in King’s Cross, announcing, as it did, the migration of power and scholarship from its dark stronghold in Bloomsbury: from the shadows of Hawksmoor’s misaligned church, St George, to the more benevolent ambiance of the child martyr, St Pancras (LOT, 141).

Dun views Kings Cross as an energy field where the centre has shifted due to urban regeneration. Vale Royal tries to re-locate this centre of power and to restore it to St Pancras Old Church, which is (quoting the notes) the ‘Head and Mother of all Christian Churches’ (VR, 96). The notes of the poem underline Stukeley’s imagination of Kings Cross as a vast necropolis, an idea given credence by the endless tombs that were discovered in the nineteenth century by Midland Railways during the tunnelling process (VR, 96). This suggests Dun’s interest in how legends, myths, folktales, and speculations become real over time. In the beginning of the poem, the narrator is aware that legends and folk stories may prove to be real and not just ‘stories circulated by simple men’ (VR, 17). This idea suggests that Dun reverses the role of reality and imagination – for legends may prove real. For Dun, legends and myths are powerful ideological vehicles for communicating cultural beliefs. He intends to reveal that reality disintegrates in the face of legends. Urban renewal is part of the reality of modern Kings Cross, but this reality threatens Kings Cross as a sacred place. The poem challenges the reader by suggesting that legends, myths, and imagination conform, more than the urban reality now, to our sense of the real. So Dun rationalises the role of legends and myths as part of the reality of Kings Cross.

The idea that modern urban growth is threatening the area’s historical and sacred reserves is also referred to in the opening stanzas of the poem where the narrator, seeking to unearth the
subterranean hidden past through his spiritual *pilgrimage*, shuts his eyes to the ‘boredom of modern contours’ (*VR*, 9). Here the poet’s vision obliterates the visible in order to examine what the contemporary city has erased. This suggests that we need to look beneath the surface to uncover the hidden reality of Kings Cross. Retracing the Fleet River which gives Kings Cross an exceptional historical, religious, and cultural significance, Dun uses the river as a metaphor (a river of memory) through which Kings Cross is revealed as the seat of civilizations and ancient empires. Modern Kings Cross, from which the narrator, as he states, is sadly disconnected, does not inspire him. It is the visionary world that underlies the present that is more attractive:

There were canals where streets had been.
And powerfully reflected light
obliterated whole ranks of unsuitable buildings. (*VR*, 10)

This historical approach proposes that modern London cannot be separated from the mythic, literary, and historical past from which it developed.

In this sense, Dun’s *Vale Royal* is cognate with Iain Sinclair’s *Lud Heat* (and *Lights Out for the Territory*) in that both texts represent London as a psychic urban space that allows the visionary to read what is hidden. Like Sinclair, Dun offers a perceptually penetrating vision of the city’s buried history by mapping and revivifying the forgotten territories of the past. Dun’s mapping of historical space, moreover, suggests the influence of Situationism through the desire to make his own mapping of London as a city of the mind:

Here I stayed bathing in the sunlight myself
until my understanding went beneath the surface
and I was shown the plan of the song *Vale Royal*. (*VR*, 10)
This internal mystic vision of what is hidden refers to the poet's intention to read what lies beyond the visual. Dun thus creates his own psychic map of what is concealed and forgotten, by envisioning the historical past that is ready to be uncovered. Both Dun and Sinclair respond to the political forces of the city. Walking the city for Sinclair is a symbolic means to criticise the political, cultural, and economic systems. Reading the city's graffiti, for example, is one way to criticise the government: 'FREE JAKE PRESCOTT/ WHOSE CONSPIRACY'\textsuperscript{145} For Sinclair, graffiti express people's attitudes towards the government and its policies. In \textit{Sorry Meniscus: Excursions to the Millennium Dome}, Sinclair criticises the British government through the Millennium Dome Experience: 'The Dome was a classic Tory scam, a pointless but vaguely patriotic symbol sprayed over with cheerleader slogans.'\textsuperscript{146} Here the Dome contrasts with graffiti because it is sprayed or faked. The Dome is seen as a political trick intended to distract people from the government's real economic intentions. Sinclair criticises the Dome builders because they want people to '[i]magine the Dome as it ought to be, rather than as it is' (\textit{SM}, 14).

Sinclair's critique of modern politics leads us to speculate on Dun's use of the two romantic figures as a means to reflect on the contemporary political situation of London. Literally, \textit{Vale Royal} celebrates romantic figures and their poetic achievement, but, as a contemporary poem, it places these figures in a contemporary context. Dun uses Blake and Chatterton as a literary device to voice his indignation at the political system. He turns the two figures into material for his poetry, like Sinclair who, as Ackroyd points out, 'has an unnerving habit of turning his friends or acquaintances into fictional characters'.\textsuperscript{147} Through their visions,

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{145} See Iain Sinclair, \textit{Lights Out for the Territory} (London: Granta, 1997), p. 27. This graffiti refers to Jake Prescott, a member of the Angry Brigade in late 1960s, who was imprisoned for ten years after he admitted his involvement in the explosions.
  \item \textsuperscript{146} Iain Sinclair, \textit{Sorry Meniscus: Excursions to the Millennium Dome} (London: Profile Books, 1999), p. 19.
\end{itemize}
Blake and Chatterton reveal a perspective that subverts that of the Masons who can be read as a symbol of political authority. Throughout the poem, myth opposes politics and this is evident in Chatterton’s continual attempts to revive the myths of the past despite the repeated oppositions of the Masons. *Vale Royal* then can be read as a historical poem, not only because it celebrates the past and revives historical myths and legends, but also because it seems to respond to the political issues of the period in which it was written. Sinclair’s influence on Dun is notable in this regard. But while Sinclair’s critique of political agendas is overt and explicit, Dun’s in *Vale Royal* is allegorical or implicit. Dun represents historical forces in order to reflect on the problems that emerged during the Thatcher era. Using Chatterton to construct a position that opposes the Masons, Dun provides an alternative model of London to that established by the political system.

The idea that Dun creates a perspective that opposes the ‘Other’ is manifest in constructing a conspiracy theory against Chatterton. Dun associates the Masons with ‘royalty’ but this association has a negative implication, because they are described as ‘Knights of the Royal Axe’ (*VR*, 43). In the poem, the Masons are referred to as sons of ‘the Widow’ who is presumably the head of this freemasonic authority. Dun reveals a conspiracy theory in which Chatterton’s mythic imagination threatens the Masons who participated in destroying the poet’s reputation. Dun claims that Horace Walpole, author of *The Castle of Otranto*, and a ‘freemason’ and ‘powerful patron of the arts’, is responsible for destroying the poet’s future (*VR*, 106).

This conspiracy theory has political connotations because the Masons represent the government to which Chatterton poses a threat: ‘Government spies have traced him from Shoreditch/ down to the red-light gutter-district of Brook Street’ (*VR*, 57). The idea that Chatterton is being watched and followed suggests that he opposes political authority:
‘Chatterton taunted royal and political figureheads, an anti-establishment poet, and in the end he was at their mercy’ (VR, 115). Later in the poem, the demonic power of the Masons is associated with politics:

In the wind-labyrinths of early May he goes hunting.  
His verse-satires hang like vultures of conscience  
in hot skies above the rottenness of the Tories.

Caught up in the political dust-storms of London,  
sometimes he detours the city in great circles.  
Drifting west on the barriers of noon, (VR, 41)

Here Chatterton’s verse-satires criticise the politics of ‘the Tories’, a term that refers to the Tory Party, the ancestor of the modern British Conservative Party which was headed by Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s. Implied in these lines is the idea that Chatterton’s poems caused a great stir in political circles. Chatterton’s attempt to deconstruct political authority underpins Dun’s conception of London as a site inhabited by political agents. Like Sinclair, Dun views politics as witchcraft:

A secret agent is making investigations in Shoreditch.  
This automaton of political witchcraft  
loiters in narrow lanes and gin-houses. (VR, 47)

This secret agent who follows Chatterton typifies this political authority. In Lud Heat, we have seen that the triangulations which Sinclair forges among Hawksmoor churches reflect in a sense Thatcher’s demonic power. Sinclair’s project of mapping zones of evil and occult power has political implications. It is one way to criticise British politics and governmental policies. Sinclair believes that the writer’s role is to exorcise the evil that was produced by politics. The relation between Thatcher and occultism encourages us to ponder on how Kings Cross in Vale
Royal became an occult, mysterious place. By making the Masons representative of the Tories, Dun is criticising Thatcher’s politics. Consequently, the ghost-like witch in Cycle One can be read as a symbol of Thatcher:

If you talk to the old folk who know this district backwards, in taverns and by firesides you will hear it said the place lies too close to the supernatural worlds,

Enchanted, and therefore abandoned. One man—half-mad in the Kentish Town workhouse—claims to have seen the red and fiery ghost

Of a Catholic woman burnt at Saint Pancras in the days of the Good Queen Bess. Long ago, an idiot-creature from Shoreditch is said to have seen Fire-crowned apparitions of the child-martyr Pancras moving in a glory through transfigured cornfields and backwoods. Someone else, lost on a system of footpaths,

Was possibly confronted by Old Mother Red Cap, the long-departed Witch of Camden, who made him walk the meadows until dawn.

He went home barefoot, but twice the man in his bones...We will remain in the Age of Reason and fathom these rumours if we can.

They will surely prove to be shallow tales, stories calculated by simple men. But they may prove otherwise... (VR 16-17).

Two points need to be discussed in relation to the stanzas above: the first engages in the question of ‘belief in legends, and the second relates to political implications.

The question of ‘belief’ is significant as it relates to whether the stories that are circulated among the inhabitants are true or false. Dun reveals an alternative London, mapped according to its historical legends and myths, through his belief in what exists behind the surface details of
Blake and Chatterton. In Sinclair’s walking and remapping of London in *Lights Out for the Territory*, ‘belief’ is also crucial in his theory of the unmapped and the forgotten. Exploring one of Hawksmoor’s churches, Christ Church, Sinclair writes: ‘Everything I believe in, everything London can do to you, starts there. The theatre of obelisks and pyramids, signs, symbols, prompts, whispers’ (*LOT*, 34). Both Sinclair and Dun create an alternative London through the ‘belief’ in occult and mythic forces. In *Lud Heat*, Sinclair forges triangulations among Hawksmoor’s Churches because he believes that Hawksmoor developed codes in the re-building of the churches, which, according to Sinclair, form a pattern of ley-lines and triangles. Both Sinclair and Dun represent an unmapped London by revealing the hidden stories behind the scenes. But while Sinclair’s walking through London uncovers the reversal of what one may expect (that London is autonomous, refusing to be fathomed or comprehended), Dun is more adept in dealing with the historical city and in providing a penetrating vision into its past. Sinclair is more attentive to the visual aspect of the city, unlike Dun, and indeed Blake, who transcend the visual in their quest for the visionary. The treasures, for example, which the narrator notices in the beginning of *Vale Royal* are visionary not visual. The revelation of ‘the Cathedral of the Sunchild’ is part of the poet’s vision of the historical and religious past. A good example of Sinclair’s interest in the visual, or the absence of the visual, is ‘*House in the Park*’ in *Lights Out* in which he reflects on Rachel Whiteread’s sculpture *House* which symbolises a vanished visual urban space. Atkins’s photographs of a tombstone in a cemetery in Chingford Mount also suggest seeing the city in terms of visual symbols.

The second point which the long stanzas above explore relates to the mysterious nature of Kings Cross as a site haunted by ghosts and apparitions. The ‘Old Mother Red Cap’ and ‘the witch of Camden’ probably refer to Thatcher. This reference reminds us of Michael Moorcock’s
Mother London (1988). As Merlin Coverley points out, Moorcock’s Mother London and Sinclair’s Downriver (1991) ‘characterise the 1980s as marking a break with the past and demonise Thatcher as the mother of all London’s recent misfortunes.’

Moorcock’s novel is cognate with Dun’s Vale Royal in that it engages with the past in order to criticise the politics of the 1980s. The novel re-imagines the Blitz of the 1940s as a dark mythic moment in the history of London. Through an account of the lost voices of the city, the three characters who experience the trauma of the Blitz, Moorcock creates a perspective on the 1980s London during Thatcherism.

Unlike Moorcock, however, Dun does not select from history a negative event such as the Blitz, but takes a general view of history emphasising the struggle of forces. In other words, the difference between Dun and Moorcock in their critique of the political system is that while the former locates opposing forces throughout history in order to reflect on London during Thatcher’s reign, the latter conceives the Blitz as a traumatic moment in the lives of three characters during Thatcher’s period, thus making the Blitz an aspect of contemporary London. The break with the past, which Coverley associates with Thatcherism, may justify Dun’s attempt to mythologise the city and the idea that Thatcher’s policies, reflected in the new urban restructuring of the city, have widened the gap between the present and the past. As Coverley remarks, ‘it has been those areas of the city most affected by regeneration in the 1980s that are now the focus of renewed interest into London’s past’ (Coverley, 134).

On the other hand, Dun’s evocation of the literary life of the metropolis and the portrayal of the rise and fall of the individual’s power in the process of creating a better society can be read as a response to Thatcher’s denial of the concept of society. Her well-known statement that

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there is no such thing as society’ implies a rejection of social values and an attempt to replace society by the individual. Vale Royal seems to dramatise this asocial view of the metropolis during Thatcherism through Chatterton who is exiled within the city. Dun imagines him floating detachedly over the city where he remains temporarily immune from the dangers of the Masons and where he recreates radiant utopias in the world of degenerate politics. Through this dichotomy of utopia/dystopia, Dun foregrounds a heterogeneous (artistic/non-artistic) urban experience. Chatterton’s utopias (and his aesthetic perspective) seem to form a rational solution to the city’s social problems, for he intends to recreate a better society. Dun’s mythologizing of Kings Cross thus provides a perspective from which the literary artist views an uncertain, politically-centred metropolitan environment. In this sense, Vale Royal underlines the new urban experience that resulted from the emergence of Thatcherite ideology which endeavours to uproot the individual from the general social milieu.

Through the interplay of opposites, one regenerating the city and the other historicising it, Dun presents an image of London under competing forces that continually re-write the metropolis. Chatterton loses the battle against the Masons. He is depicted as an anti-hero, a figure that conspicuously lacks heroic qualities. His attic gives him inspiration but it is also a ‘coffin’ (VR, 74). He is both a forger and a creative writer (VR, 62). This tension between opposites mirrors Blake’s dramatisation of innocence and experience, reason and imagination, heaven and hell. The problem which Dun locates in his poem is that contemporary London does not inspire the imagination of the artist. The city now is different. It is ‘[d]iscoloured by fogs which vomit from the turmoil of the streets’ (VR 47). The city no longer stirs the imagination of the poet:

Long ago the saffron and lavender fields of Shoreditch
were suitable for the poet exploring the air
to the east of the city. There were avenues of mint and vervain.

But now, in these times, Shoreditch does not inspire
a Romance of the Rose or Legend of Temperance in poets. (VR 47)

These lines explain why Dun is fascinated by Blake’s and Chatterton’s imaginations. These romantic poets presented alternative models of the city. Dun laments the modern condition of the city, but he hopes that his poem will reinstate that lost imagination to contemporary London. Dun’s *Vale Royal* is indeed an ambitious attempt to re-imagine London following Blake’s and Chatterton’s steps.

Dun is not only concerned with presenting a historical London but also with the material and physical transformation of the metropolis. On the one hand, London is a great centre of the arts; on the other, it is an irrational and incomprehensible entity. This duality of vision is stressed in the following lines:

London of the broken spine, the dead stone countenance,
a city once rich with harvesting the glorious arts
but now the wasteland of respectable greed,

Where even love, man’s great angelic right,
is sold with rat-cunning or bartered for power
till the race of perfection is blind to the first star of night… (VR 46)

London is no longer the centre of art. Dun laments the condition of the contemporary city where moral and ethical values are replaced by corrupt and evil power. This idea underlies Eliot’s degenerate London in *The Waste Land*. Juxtaposing London now with the poetic visions of Blake and Chatterton serves to reflect on the condition of the contemporary city, one that is inferior to its historical status. This idea is qualified by Chatterton’s attempts to replace London
(which has turned into 'a necropolis', 'a Medusa', 'a serpent' (*VR, 67*), a city of evil political power and a kind of hell) with the utopias that once stood on it.

*Vale Royal* represents the metropolis as a battlefield, a space where forces struggle. On the one hand, there are the Masons who advocate 'nihilism' and 'predestination'. The doctrine of 'nihilism' denies the existence of any objective moral truth; its literal meaning is a belief in nothing. The doctrine of predestination refers to the theological belief that God guides those who are destined for salvation. The Masons are referred to as devils, Tories, government spies and agents who turn the city into a necropolis, ravaged by death and war. On the other hand, there is a counterforce: poets, who revive the city through their dreams of legends and myths:

> He will break their wheels of predestination  
> that turn below the horizons of life,  
> eclipse their action with his latest work. (*VR, 55*)

Chatterton reacts to this force by 'setting in motion the cycles of legendary London' (*VR, 55*). Through these forces Dun presents two visions of London: the first is a necropolis, a furnace, a serpent, and a monster. The other is the city of historical myths that restore order.

Dun is not only influenced by the way Sinclair criticises the political system but also by the way he uses Hawksmoor churches in *Lud Heat* as sites where inexplicable occult killings occur. Dun centralises his poem on St Pancras Old Church in Kings Cross. The church is 'a keystone in the poem for its legends and mysteries' (*VR, 96*). Like Sinclair who sees Hawksmoor's churches as centres of energies, malevolent and sinister, connected with the Ratcliffe Highway and Whitechapel murders, Dun connects the energies of St Pancras Old Church with the legendary murders and killings that happened in its vicinity. The two texts, thus, deal with the mystic and occult power of London churches. As Peter Barry rightly notes, the
energies in *Vale Royal* are at times ‘benign, mystical, inspiring and healing’, and at other times they are negative such as ‘the sacred river [which] is hopelessly polluted’ and ‘the druids performing human sacrifice by burning’. Indeed, this comment reflects the problem of *Vale Royal*. The fact that the poem represents two different and opposing energies weakens its thematic content. *Vale Royal* would better represent the political problems of the period had Dun concentrated exclusively on the city’s negative energies which might enhance the poem’s representation of London during Thatcherism. Barry contrasts Dun’s reading of the negative and positive energies of Kings Cross with ‘Sinclair’s negative reading of the East End as a vortex of negative energies’ (Barry, 1999, 61). Though Dun’s purpose is to revive the sacred nature of the place and to create a contrast between Kings Cross as a degenerate modern wasteland and Kings Cross as a historically sacred site, this method remains at odds with Dun’s attempt to represent the degeneracy of modern life and the political issues of the contemporary city.

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Conclusion

As this study has shown, the city within the work of Eliot, Williams, Fisher, Sinclair, and Dun is continually imagined and re-imagined in order to reflect the intellectual and cultural challenges which the city embodies. Eliot, Williams, Sinclair, Fisher, and Dun never cease to explore and record the moral, cultural, and social problems which the city engenders. We have seen how Eliot’s development of poetic form reflects a desire to articulate modern responses to the city and that London in *The Waste Land* is symptomatic of a modern condition. Eliot’s poetics produced a new idiom in order to diagnose the underlying problems of modern urban experience, by confronting its ugly reality whilst alluding to the social and cultural forces that shape it. For him, the city is a place of cultural, literary, and intellectual exchange, and a place that elicits literary associations. The city is historically palimpsestic but Eliot does not endeavour to logically connect the multi-layers of revenants for his reader. Eliot was interested in the universal patterns that link cities together through time, but in *Paterson*, Williams sought to invent a form of poetic modernism which acknowledged the regional/local identity of the city. Its inhabitants testify to the idea that no matter how many stories, incidents, and details the poet collects, there is always something new that the city generates. Here the city is autonomous and despite its provinciality it is capable of generating a new poetic in which the complexity of text and city mirror each other. The poem is a failure, but this failure is suggestive of the city’s ineffable and unfathomable quality.

Roy Fisher’s poetry too grapples with this problem when concentrating on Birmingham as an alternative city and by adopting a perspective similar to that of Williams. The city is an
arena of tensions, with images of the industrial city of the past disrupting our contemporary urban perceptions. The industrial ghost of the past, which the spirit of urban regeneration and renewal tries to overcome, continues to impress itself on the inhabitant’s mind. As a result, this ghostly visitation elides the boundaries between the present and the past, and so the city becomes a site of memory where the imaginary and the real are in a constant conflict, rendering the observer in a state of paralysis. Transcending the boundaries between real and imagined cities also prefigures Sinclair’s visionary mapping of London where material and mental spaces overlap. Sinclair illuminates a forgotten territory, highlighting that any change in the material space of the city will have its corollary on the walker’s mental map. Sinclair raises the reader’s attention to the city as a palimpsest, as a space of continual inscriptions and erasures. Unlike Eliot who envisions the city as a disjointed unearthly sign of modern disillusionment, Sinclair sees the city as a living inter-textual experience. In Vale Royal, the relation between mental and material spaces is also breached as Dun re-imagines London as inextricably linked with its historical, literary and cultural tradition. Vale Royal refers to urban redevelopment and describes the changing condition of the metropolis in relation to its myths and legends. In doing so, Dun transcends the limits of the material city, the actual city of time and space, in order to illuminate an unmapped territory within the human mind. By emphasising the literary environment and the conception of place as the locus of art and artists, Dun highlights the problems of the city in relation to the life and death of the artist. Both Blake’s and Chatterton’s visions of Kings Cross emphasise the reciprocal relation between the poet and the city.

The thesis presents new contributions to poetry of the city. It contributes to a new understanding of William Blake as a ‘loco-specific’ predecessor of the twentieth century, by suggesting that Blake did not only explore the visionary but was also attentive to the meanings
and specificities of place. Associating Iain Sinclair, Roy Fisher, and Aidan Andrew Dun with the 'The British Poetry Revival' of the 1970s, the thesis views these poets as the real heirs of the 'high modernist' era urbanists such as Eliot, Pound, and Williams. The final chapter of the thesis, moreover, provides a new reading of Aidan Andrew Dun's *Vale Royal* by exploring the poem's revival of 'Romantic Afterlives' and the technique of using the past to reflect on the contemporary situation of the modern city. The poets discussed in this thesis not only read the city against its earlier cultural, historical, and social paradigms but also look at the city in terms of its impending future. Whilst engaged in depicting the tensions between the city and the kind of the poetic images it calls forth, their poetic representations of the city question the boundaries between real and imagined spaces. By revealing how the modern city has formed a reciprocal relation with literature, this thesis adds to the broader discourse on the role of the city within modern literature by arguing that literature has given an imaginative reality to the city which in turn has shaped poetic conceptions of urban life.
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